

Iran's supreme leader blasts Arafat over Mideast peace deal

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei condemned the latest Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, using the 1,000th gathering of Friday prayers in Tehran to single out Palestinian President Yasser Arafat for a stinging personal rebuke.

Khamenei, appearing before an overflow crowd of Muslim worshippers and dignitaries at Tehran University, branded Arafat a "lackey" of Israel and challenged his legitimacy as leader of the Palestinian people.

The deal, signed in Washington last week, was doomed to fail in its bid to bring increased security to Israel in exchange for Palestinian land, said Khamenei, who as supreme leader wields final say in all matters of state.

"The Palestinian nation is the enemy of the Zionists and the enemy of the lackeys of the Zionists, even if that includes Yasser Arafat," he said. "He did not have the right to decide for the Palestinian people."

His remarks, delivered dur-

ing the political portion of his sermon, evoked chants of "Death to America" and "Neither compromise nor submission. Fight against Israel." Among the audience of senior religious and political figures was moderate President Mohammad Khatami, architect of Iran's improved international ties, and his foreign minister, Kamal Kharazi. Both have criticised the peace deal.

Also present were the Palestinian ambassador and envoys from a number of Muslim states.

Khamenei said U.S. mediation in the Arab-Israeli talks reflected an attempt by President Bill Clinton to deflect attention from a sex scandal hanging over his office.

"This deal was made because of problems in America and the problems Clinton is facing," he said. "They want to bring security to the Zionists but they can be sure they will fail." But his toughest criticism was aimed at Arafat, whom he charged had replaced Israeli

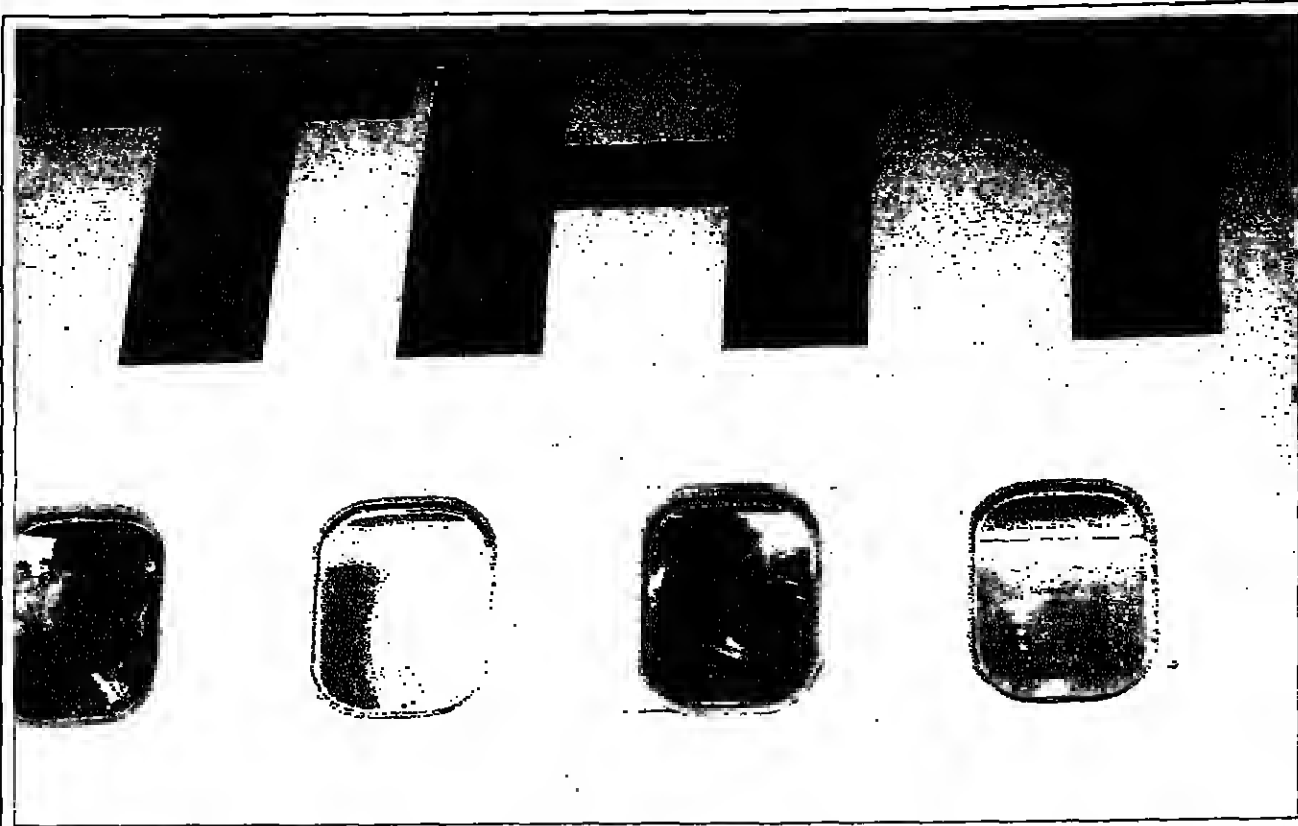
security forces as the jailer of the Palestinians. "They took the problem from the shoulders of Israel and put it on the Palestinian people," he said.

Khamenei delivered his sermon to a large crowd that filled the prayer pavilion at Tehran University and spilled out into the campus at large and surrounding city streets. The gathering was the 1,000th weekly prayer since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Several parking lots and alleyways were set aside for women, who must be segregated from men under Iran's Islamic rules.

"These prayers are unique in the world, for they inform the people politically," said Khamenei, who marked the memory of Friday prayer leaders killed in the service of the revolution.

Iran says Israel has no right to exist. Tehran denies U.S. charges that it backs Islamist groups opposing the Arab-Israeli peace accord and says it gives them only moral support.



TURKISH PLANE HIJACKED: Passengers peer out of the windows of the hijacked Turkish Airlines plane at Ankara's Esenboga airport late Thursday. The aircraft, hijacked with 39 people on board, landed safely at its scheduled destination in Ankara from the southern city of Adena. Turkish special forces stormed the plane, killing the hijacker and releasing all 33 passengers and six crew members unharmed. The hijacker had initially demanded to go to Lausanne, Switzerland (AFP photo)

Report: Israel has developed bio-weapons that target Arabs

From the Jerusalem Post

ISRAEL HAS developed "ethnic bullets" that are tailored to target only Arabs, the London-based Foreign Report suggested Thursday.

Quoting an "unconfirmed report" from its South African sources, the newsletter says Israeli scientists may have succeeded in developing a biological weapon that is based on aspects of the Arab genetic system.

These elements were reported to have been isolated after years of research on Jews of Arab origin, particularly Iraqi Jews.

The South African sources

claimed that the "ethnic bullet" programme was developed in apartheid South Africa for possible use against blacks.

Cooperation between South African and Israeli scientists is said to have been close during that period.

"The report reaching us says the Israelis took the project over and directed it against the Arabs," noted the newsletter. "One of the reported conclusions was that there was a genetic difference between Ashkenazi Jews and Jews of Arabic origin and also between Jews and Arabs."

The research, according to this account, was conducted over many years in conditions

of top secrecy for security reasons and because of "the sensitivity in Israeli society about genetic experiments."

The newsletter reported that many scientists are sceptical about the success of the project "but, our sources insist, some scientists appeared to have identified an illness that could be transmitted through Baghdad's water supply and affect only Arabs."

The research, which was apparently completed some two years ago, was carried out at several centres.

Israeli officials declined to confirm the existence of the "ethnic bullet," but one told the newsletter: "We have a basket

full of strategic surprises which we will not hesitate to use if we feel that the State of Israel is under serious threat."

The potential for genetic weapons was first raised publicly in March 1996 by the former head of Sweden's defence research establishment, Gen. Bo Rybeck. He suggested, for example, that a mixture of influenza or diphtheria could be designed to affect only blacks, a designer toxin could be aimed at Serbs, or people with blue eyes might be infected with Alzheimer's disease.

At the time, Rybeck said that as far as he knew no government was developing genetic weapons.

Lebanese court sentences Israeli collaborators to prison

BEIRUT (AP) — A military court sentenced 16 Lebanese on Thursday to up to 10 years in prison for spying for Israel, the official National News Agency reported.

The court convicted them of "contacting the Israeli enemy and its agents and passing on information to its advantage" and entering Israel without permission from the Lebanese government, the agency reported.

The 16 were arrested earlier this year and charged on July 8.

A statement issued by the court said that one defendant was sentenced to three months in jail and another to 10 years. The other 14 received sentences of one to eight years.

The statement did not give any breakdown of the charges nor any personal details of the accused apart from their names.

The court sentenced another 59 accused in absentia to prison terms ranging from 10 to 15 years with hard labour on similar charges, the agency said.

A further three accused were found innocent.

Those convicted were found to have provided information on Lebanese and Syrian troop movements and the activities of Lebanese guerrillas fighting Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, the agency reported.

Israeli troops and a pro-Israeli militia occupy a strip of territory in southern Lebanon as a buffer against guerrilla attacks on northern Israel. Syria stations about 30,000 troops in Lebanon.

'Iran releases most Baha'i teachers'

WASHINGTON (R) — Iran has set free all but four out of more than 30 Baha'is arrested last month in a crackdown on a university established by members of the 19th-century religion, the U.S. State Department said on Thursday.

The four join nine other Baha'is in jail in Iran and six of those 13 are on death row, spokesman James Foley said.

The people arrested were members of the Baha'i Insti-

tute of Higher Education, a self-help university founded in 1987 after Iran made it harder for Baha'is to attend public universities.

Baha'is in Iran said earlier this month the Iranians had cracked down on the institute in 14 cities, arresting 32 people and breaking into and looting many homes.

Foley said the Iranians had initially arrested at least 36 people in raids on more than 500 homes and office buildings owned or rented by

Iranian Baha'is.

They confiscated materials that had no political or religious content, such as dentistry and accountancy textbooks, as well as some laboratory equipment, he added.

"We urge the government of Iran to eliminate restrictions on the practice of religion and to recognise and uphold the fundamental human right to freedom of conscience and belief," he said. He also urged Iran not to carry out the executions.

More Israeli-Palestinian talks on Geneva Convention hoped soon

GENEVA (AP) — Switzerland expects to organise a second meeting in the near future between Israeli and Palestinian delegates to discuss the Geneva Conventions on the conduct of war, officials said Thursday.

In Geneva last June, the two sides secretly held a first meeting that could start a process for dealing with Jewish settlements under international law.

The second meeting is expected to take part in the southern Swiss town of Locarno, but no date has been confirmed.

The talks marked the first

time Israel has attended negotiations that implied any formal recognition that the conven-

tions have any application to territories it occupied in 1967. They fell far short of Arab and European demands that all 188 countries of the convention be convened to discuss enforcement against settlement building. Israel fears such an assembly could build pressure on Israel over the settlements.

The Arab-European position has won overwhelming backing in the U.N. General Assembly, with only the United States, Israel and Micronesia voting against.

Israel, a signatory to the Geneva Convention, refuses to accept its application to the territory it occupied in the 1967 Mideast war, which it maintains is Jewish land.

The convention bans the usurpation of land by an occupying power — a provision the Palestinians and the European Union say would ban settlement building.

Switzerland, depository of the Geneva Conventions, proposed the Israeli-Palestinian talks. The International Committee of the Red Cross, charged with upholding the convention, also was represented.

The bilateral contacts are the first part of a package proposed by the Swiss.

The second, a three-day experts' meeting of signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention, the 1949 update of the world's ground rules for the

conduct of war, wrapped up Thursday.

Experts from 118 countries were present to identify general problems in applying the conventions and possible means of overcoming them.

Walter Gyger, the chairman and Switzerland's ambassador to international organisations in Geneva, stressed that it was not the conference of signatories called for at the General Assembly or a preparation for such a conference.

The meeting avoided identifying specific countries or territories.

"The ground rules were with some interpretation respected," Gyger told reporters. "Nobody was interrupted."

Israeli informer to be charged over Rabin assassination — report

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein is planning to charge a right-wing extremist who served as a secret service informer for failing to prevent the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin three years ago, the Yediot Aharonot newspaper reported Friday.

However, a justice official denied the report, which comes amid a mounting controversy over the role of Avishai Rabin, who is suspected of inciting right-wing comrades to activism while handing over information to the Shin Bet, Israel's internal secret service.

Rabin, code named "Champagne," was an associate of Yigal Amir, the Jewish militant who gunned down Rabin on Nov. 4, 1995 in a bid to halt the government's policy of transferring West Bank land to the Palestini-

ans. Deputy Minister Michael Eitan earlier this month accused the government of hiding evidence that Rabin knew of Amir's plan to murder Rabin but did not inform his Shin Bet handlers.

Eitan, a junior minister without portfolio from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party, demanded that Rabin be put on trial.

Shin Bet officials denied Eitan's accusations, insisting Rabin never informed his handlers of the plans by Amir, who is serving a life sentence in prison for the killing.

The Israeli right has used the Rabin case to deflect accusations by Rabin's Labour Party that it contributed to his murder with a virulent campaign of anti-government protests in the months running up to the assassination.

Yediot Aharonot said justice ministry officials were opposed to laying charges against Rabin because of insufficient evidence, adding that Rubinstein himself decided six months ago not to take any action.

Rubinstein has now bowed to right-wing pressure that Rabin be charged, the paper said.

However, justice ministry spokeswoman Ety Eshed said no decision had yet been taken by Rubinstein.

Last month, Margalit Har-Shefi, a friend of Amir, was sentenced to nine months in prison for failing to prevent the assassination.

Yigal Amir's brother, Hagai, who is serving a 12-year prison sentence for complicity in the murder, filed suit against Rabin in June accusing him of inciting violence and seeking \$1.4 million in damages.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Cartoon — Antimaniacs
15:30Clowning Around
16:00Drama — Neighbours
16:30Doc. — Pear Pressure
17:00 French Programme — "Faut Pas Rever"
18:00Drama — Wind at My Back
19:00Le Journal
19:15 French Programme — "Lo'uf de Colomb"
19:30News headlines
19:35Murphy Brown
20:00Today's Health
20:30Sirens
21:05 Drama — ABC of Democracy
21:30Making Master Pieces
22:00News in English
2:30Feature film — "Once upon a Crime"
2:59Twisted
3:00End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

Fair
Sunrise/Duha
Dhuhr
Asr
Maghrib
Isha

CHES

eth Church
urch Tel.
Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295.
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932.
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440.
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138.
Church of Presentation, Sweifiah Tel. 5920146.
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757.
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190.
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679.
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052.
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331.
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Fine weather conditions will prevail with temperatures ris-

ing slightly but remaining below average and winds northwesterly moderate. On Sunday, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of light rain in the northern parts of the Kingdom. In Aqaba, it will be fine, winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman11/24
Aqaba17/29
Deserts08/26
Jordan Valley17/30

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 22 Aqaba 28. Humidity readings: Amman 38 per cent, Aqaba 41 per cent.
Following are the highest temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun20
Jerash25
Um Qays24
Madaba24
Petra25
Dead Sea30

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim4885446
Dr. Arafat Ashhab5602507

Dr. Ayman Muhsenab4875748
Dr. Jamal Jbarah5347351
Firas pharmacy5661912
Al Asema pharmacy4637055
Naboukh pharmacy4623672
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53200

IRBID:
Dr. Mohammad Al Shari' (02) 710588
Dr. Quds pharmacy(02) 710588
ZARQA:
Dr. Youssef Abu Sa'd (09) 989000
Khalifeh pharmacy (09) 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 1924621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone

Repairs4623101
Abdaji Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdi5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre5858636
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Ajileh Maternity4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5669131
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667277/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731

Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital(02) 7101372, (02) 7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02) 7102831, (02) 7102100
Speciality Hospital(02) 7103100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:00Tehran (RJ)
08:30Damascus (RJ)
08:30Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
09:55Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
10:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:35Colombo (RJ)
15:00New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:20Cairo (RJ)
17:40London, Vienna (RJ)
19:40Frankfurt (RJ)
19:40Rome (RJ)
22:50Lamaca (RJ)
23:30Paris (add) (RJ)
23:50Paris (add) (RJ)
02:10Madrid (RJ)
05:00Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights

13:05Vienna (OS)
13:15Riyadh (SV)
13:20Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
14:05Rome (AZ)
18:00Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:05Paris (AF)
19:15Frankfurt (LH)
21:35Cairo (MS)
22:55London, Damascus (BA)
23:35Amsterdam (KL)
01:00Belgrade (JU)

Royal Wings (RW)

10:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
11:15 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00Aqaba (add) (RJ)
06:30Beirut (RJ)
09:35Frankfurt (RJ)
11:00Aqaba, Paris (RJ)
11:15Amsterdam, Rome (RJ)
11:30Geneva, Paris (add) (RJ)
11:40London, Brussels (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
13:55Madrid (RJ)
19:35Lamaca (RJ)
20:15Bombay (RJ)
20:30Jeddah (RJ)
21:30Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
00:50Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
03:50Madrid (RJ)

Other Flights

06:15 Damascus, London (BA)
06:30Lamaca (CY)
14:15 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:45Riyadh (SV)
15:50Vienna (OS)
19:00Dubai (EK)
20:00Beirut (ME)
22:35Cairo (MS)
00:35Amsterdam (KL)
02:10Belgrade (JU)

Lebanese court sentences Israeli collaborator to prison

SEIRIT (AP) — A Lebanese court sentenced a man to prison for collaborating with Israeli forces during the 1980s.

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arged over report

AR

DEPART

what's going on

AR

Home News



Orphans hold pictures of His Majesty King Hussein at a prayer ceremony Thursday (Photo by Yousef Allan)

Orphans pray for King's recovery

JEZA (AP) — More than 250 orphans opened their hands in prayer under a cloud of dust in the desert. The Muslim ritual is usually performed to beseech God for rain.

But this prayer ceremony at a desert town 50 kilometers south of Amman had a different purpose. "It's a special prayer to implore God for the recovery of King Hussein and his speedy return home," organiser Abdul Razzak Abu Feilat said Thursday.

King Hussein has been receiving treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, since July. The prayers were the second case of national well-wishing to King Hussein this week. On Wednesday, a group announced they had collected more than 15,000 signatures on a 228-metre-long birthday card for the Monarch, who turns 63 on Nov. 14. It is thought to be the longest birthday card ever made.

The orphans — mostly of the age group five to 10 — have a special bond with the King. After it came to his notice last year that they lacked adequate facilities, he gave them one of his residences. In a subsequent Cabinet reshuffle, the King accused ministers of "negligence in caring for our young angels." He has often visited the orphans in their new home on the outskirts of Amman.

So when the orphans stepped off a train at Jerza on Thursday, they were wearing white T-shirts with the King's portrait and the slogan: "Come back to us safely, you the father of all orphans." One of the children, Mutaseem Hamdi, 10, said: "I came here to beg God for his recovery because I am very sad and worried that he's sick."

Minister stresses need to expand Peace Corps presence in Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Mamsar Thursday stressed the importance of increasing the number of American Peace Corps volunteers in Jordan to provide more services and help develop remote areas.

He added that the 55 volunteers have provided free social services to the handicapped, the elderly, juveniles, environment protection societies, mother and infant care centres and schools. According to Mamsar, all official reports have attested to the performance of the volunteers and their dedication in carrying out their duties without interfering in local communities or attempting to influence traditional ideas and ways of thinking.

The minister said the volunteers have worked to firmly establish bridges of mutual trust and understanding with Jordanian society through hard work and professional commitment. The ministry chose Madaba as a base for training the volunteers because of its proximity to Amman as well as the city's atmosphere, which Mamsar said combines a modern, urban style of living and a strong tradition of family ties.

The Peace Corps volunteers are presently working across the Kingdom in areas that are considered extremely remote, Mamsar said. He added that the volunteers are working in various fields, including training English teachers. Mark Geran, director of the Peace Corps in Jordan, said the number of the volunteers may be increased next year to a total of 70. The Peace Corps' activities fall within the framework of a cooperation agreement signed by both parties under which Jordanian families host the American volunteers, he added.

Jordanian, Palestinian agriculture ministries conclude trade agreement

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian and Palestinian ministries of agriculture have concluded an agreement at talks held in Gaza on facilitating trade exchanges and intensifying their pressure on Israel to relax restrictive measures enforced at Jordan River crossing points. Following talks with Palestinian Agriculture Minister Hikmat Zeid, Hashem Shbouh, secretary general of the Agriculture Ministry, said the two sides arranged visits by Jordanian farmers and merchants to the Palestinian self-rule areas on Dec. 9-10 and agreed to discuss agricultural trade

exchanges and procedures such as providing certificates of origin. The two sides agreed that Jordan will offer facilities at the port of Aqaba to support the transportation of imported live sheep destined for the Palestinian territories. Zeid said the meeting followed up on earlier discussions held in Amman concerning the quota of agricultural products exchanged by the two sides. The Palestinian minister said Israeli security measures were the main obstacle hindering trade exchanges, adding that the two sides are putting pressure on the Israelis to end measures governing the passage of goods between Palestine and Jordan. The two sides are keen on promoting trade and seek to eliminate impediments preventing the Palestinians from exporting goods to Jordan and other Arab countries via the Kingdom.

Shbouh said the Jordanian delegation met with Palestinian officials and farmers and discussed a wide range of topics concerning trade. According to Shbouh, the two sides agreed to allow Jordanian dairy and livestock products to the Palestinian self-rule areas duty free.

On behalf of the activist Armed Islamic Group, in 1995 he was convicted in Belgium of playing a prominent role in a criminal association. French authorities also have accused Zaoui of storing electronic parts that could have been used to make explosive devices. Last spring Swiss authorities said they were increasing restrictions on Zaoui, claiming he was using the Internet and other means to promote violence. Police confiscated his fax machine and forbade him to use the Internet.

'Algerian suspect extradited from Switzerland'

(Continued from page 12) Zaoui was expelled "without taking into consideration his wife's sickness or the infancy of his four children, who were also deported with him to an unknown area," Swiss Justice Ministry spokesman Viktor Schlumpf confirmed that Zaoui was deported with his family on a charter aircraft. He also declined to identify the destination, but said Switzerland committed itself to paying part of the family's living costs. Zaoui had been allowed to remain in Switzerland while his appeal for asylum was pending. He entered Switzerland from Belgium last November. He has been charged in France with membership in a terrorist organisation. Last May French Judge Roger le Loire questioned Zaoui in the presence of Swiss prosecutors, said Juerg Blaser, an official in the Swiss Federal Prosecutor's Office. Zaoui is accused by France of using false documents and illegal trafficking with French identity papers on behalf of the activist Armed Islamic Group. In 1995 he was convicted in Belgium of playing a prominent role in a criminal association. French authorities also have accused Zaoui of storing electronic parts that could have been used to make explosive devices. Last spring Swiss authorities said they were increasing restrictions on Zaoui, claiming he was using the Internet and other means to promote violence. Police confiscated his fax machine and forbade him to use the Internet.

In a letter to the Swiss cabinet, Zaoui claimed he has no links to violence, but sought an "honourable political solution" for Algeria. An estimated 75,000 people have been killed in fighting between Islamists and security forces in Algeria's nearly six-year insurgency. The insurgency began after the military-backed government called off a January 1992 election that the Islamic Salvation Front was expected to win.

The Palestinians say that expanding settlements falls within the category of such unilateral actions, although Israel insists it has the right to build within existing Jewish communities in the occupied territories. Arafat was met by more than 1,000 well-wishers when he arrived in Ramallah from his Gaza City headquarters to chair a cabinet meeting later Friday.

Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and civil servants were prominent in the crowd, as were Palestinian flags and pictures of Arafat, in an apparently orchestrated show of support following tensions in Ramallah between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and local political activists. Palestinian security agents shot and killed a youth of Arafat's own Fateh movement here on Sunday during angry street protests over a police raid on the group's local offices. The unrest was seen as a possible precursor of a power struggle within Fateh and the PNA, especially given Arafat's pledge in the recent peace accord to collect illegal weapons from groups like Fateh. In a bid to ease tensions, Arafat paid a condolence call Friday on the family of the slain Fateh member, Wasim Tariq, 17.

'Infrastructure of Jesus' baptism site to be completed by 2000'

By Alia Shakri Hamzeh

AMMAN — Infrastructure work on the baptism site of Jesus Christ on the eastern bank of the Jordan River is expected to be completed by the year 2000, Minister of Tourism Akel Bittaji said Friday.

"Work on paving a road to the baptism site will start soon," he said, adding that additional work on establishing tourist centres in different religious sites and villages and linking them together will also be carried out. He said the total cost of the baptism infrastructure project will be around \$5 million, \$3 million of which were provided by the United States Agency for International Development. The balance will be covered by the government.

According to officials, plans to develop the site were part of a drive to encourage religious tourism in the Kingdom. Access to the site, once a mined military zone, was made possible after Jordan and Israel signed the 1994 peace treaty, ending a 46-year state of war. Bittaji said the site will attract many of the several million travellers expected to visit holy sites in Jerusalem and elsewhere to mark the start of Christianity's third Millennium. He said he expected around two million tourists to enter Jordan during the year 2000, adding that Jordan's tourism potential would be significantly enhanced if the site where Jesus was baptised could be included in their itinerary. The proposed development of the baptism site is expected to attract both Christians and Muslims since Jesus and John the Baptist feature in both religions.



A view of the Jordan River. Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Bittaji yesterday said infrastructure of Jesus' baptism site should be ready by the year 2000 (File photo)

The project includes the creation of "a sort of tourism superstructure," including a prayer hall, mosque, church, baptism pool and a rest house. "Visitors could take advantage of a string of new hotels planned for the Dead Sea shore in Swazimah, five kilometres from the baptism site," Bittaji said earlier. He added that Israel has a baptism site on the southern shore of Galilee, but said that it was artificial and that Jordan has the unique potential provided by a real and credible product. Teams from the Department of Antiquities said they were excavating at the area to ensure protection of its sanctity and its surrounding environment before the area is opened to tourists by the end of 1999. The department's archaeologists said they were also preparing the area where Jesus is believed to have retreated in the wilderness for 40 days after his baptism. Ancient churches, mosaic floors and water systems have so far been uncovered. Excavation teams have also found a route used by Christian pilgrims hundreds of years ago, starting in Jerusalem, passing through the Jordan River and ending in Madaba, 30 kilometres south of Amman. According to analysts, the Kingdom's tourism industry is banking on an expected boom to improve figures battered by two years of political uncertainty in the region that has scared away potential visitors. Owners of 28 new hotels across Jordan hope an unexpected influx of tourists into neighbouring Palestine and Israel will spill over to the Kingdom, heralding the start of a flourishing industry in Jordan. But analysts also criticised Jordan's tourism capabilities, saying it has not yet capitalised on or properly promoted the kingdom's estimated 25 biblical sites. They added that international visitors seem to focus more on the West Bank and Israel despite Jordan's millennium campaign. The Jordan Tourism Board earlier said it was also working hard on promoting Jordan abroad as a major tourist destination, not just to mark the millennium. "We are concentrating on developing the right plan not only for the millennium, but for the presence of Jordan in the international market," JTB Managing Director Marwan Khoury said.

'Used domestic water should be recycled for agricultural, industrial use'

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Water used for domestic purposes should be recycled and exploited in agricultural, industrial and other fields as part of a solution to tackle Jordan's chronic water shortage problem, a water expert said recently. Water expert and University of Jordan Professor Elias Salameh said recycling water is the "best solution to help solve the issue," because other solutions, such as drawing water from the Disi aquifer and from the Euphrates River, might not be feasible. "Desalinating sea water or importing drinking water from neighbouring countries would [also] not be feasible plans because of their high costs," Salameh said during a lecture entitled "Jordan's Current Water Situation: Future Expectations" at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) Wednesday. The water expert warned against over-pumping of the Disi aquifer because such misuse, he said, could reduce the water level and increase salts which, as a result, would make the aquifer's water unfit even for agricultural use. An official report revealed that fresh water resources will be fully utilised by the year 2005. "The quality of the Disi aquifer's water is considered to be among the highest in the world, and therefore, it must be used carefully," Salameh said. "One of the clearest examples of such water abuse is the over-pumping procedures which are turning the unique Azraq Oasis into a different place."

The RSCN has said the site was degraded by over-pumping in the 1980s until the two springs feeding the oasis dried up completely in 1992. The society, with funding from several international bodies, is engaging in efforts to restore the oasis. Two weeks ago, the government announced that it was seeking to appoint a consortium to finance, construct and manage the \$700 million Disi project to pump water from Disi to Amman. The project would be a joint venture with a Jordanian public shareholding company. Last week, Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki said the government is devising plans to eliminate over-pumping and protect the Kingdom's eight water basins. "In addition to the water shortage, other industrial and agricultural pollutants are worsening the problem," said the university professor. According to Salameh, the individual's water share in Jordan is around 83 litres per day, while the figure is 60 litres per day in Palestine and 280 per day in Israel. Official figures suggest that by 2000, Jordan's population, growing at around 3.5 per cent per year, will require 1,257 million cubic metres of water to cover minimum needs, while resources will be capable of supplying only 960 million cubic metres. Jordan relies mainly on rainwater, tapped from surface water sources such as rivers and renewable groundwater sources, to meet domestic, agricultural and industrial needs. On signing the 1994 peace treaty with Israel, Jordan was guaranteed an additional 215 million cubic metres of water a year through new dams, a purification plant and diversion projects. Under the agreement, Jordan is currently storing winter water in Israel's Lake Tiberias, which it later reclaims in the summer, but of the total 215 million cubic metres promised, Jordan is currently receiving only about 60 million cubic metres.

USAID loans Jordan \$70 million

AMMAN (Petra) — The United States Agency for International Development will grant Jordan a \$70 million loan which will be re-loaned to 35,000 Jordanian citizens over the next four years to help them launch small businesses. Speaking at a lecture held Friday at the U.S. Information Service, Jamal Jahiri, a specialist in managing private sector projects, said that half of the beneficiaries should be females and that one-third of the beneficiaries should not reside in Amman. Jahiri said the loan was granted to help Jordan develop its domestic economy. He added that USAID finances a partnership programme of Jordanian and American businesspersons which will provide \$15 million to help support the Jordanian economy. Jahiri said USAID has financed the construction of 48 schools and a highway between Amman and the Dead Sea as well as a project for improving water quality.

Fire at Swedish Halloween disco kills 60; 180 hurt

GOTHENBURG, Sweden (R) — Sixty young people were killed and 180 injured when fire broke out at a Halloween party in a cultural centre in Sweden's port city of Gothenburg, police said Friday.

But police said the fire, one of the worst in recent Swedish history, appeared to have started by accident. "There's nothing that indicates this was a fire started deliberately," Mats Sjöström, the police officer in charge at the scene, told Reuters.

"The fire could have been started by some electrical spark in the club," he said. "No witnesses have said there were any signs that someone had brought any fire bombs or such things to start a fire."

Police said 59 youths burned to death or died from smoke inhalation as flames raced through the Macedonian cultural centre, a 40 metre long building near the city's docklands. One youth died later in hospital.

Some bodies were so badly burnt, they would have to be identified from dental records, according to a Macedonian translator at one hospital.

"It looked like a gas chamber in Auschwitz must have done, counting

the dead was impossible," Lennart Olin, who led the rescue operation, told Swedish radio.

Between 300 and 400 teenagers, some Swedish but most of them immigrants from Macedonia, Yugoslavia, Somalia and Iran, were at the disco party on the second floor of the centre when the fire broke out at 11.43 p.m. (22.43 GMT) Thursday.

Police said only one of the two fire exits seems to have been in working order. In the ensuing panic, many fleeing partygoers jumped out of the second floor windows, breaking their legs.

Of the 180 injured, most aged between 14 and 20, 27 were in critical condition, and seven were to be flown by military helicopter to specialist anti-burn clinics around Sweden. Others were being treated in four hospitals in Gothenburg.

"People were screaming: 'Our friends are in there! Our friends are in there!' Some tried to go in again after their friends and not all of them made it back," survivor Dlaco Salwati told Swedish television.

Officials said desperate young people searching for their friends among the survivors had impeded rescue efforts. Schools in Sweden

were closed for an autumn break this week.

"It was very difficult for the policemen at the beginning because people were jumping from the roof and from the windows on to the policemen down below," Gothenburg police spokesman Bengt Staff told Reuters.

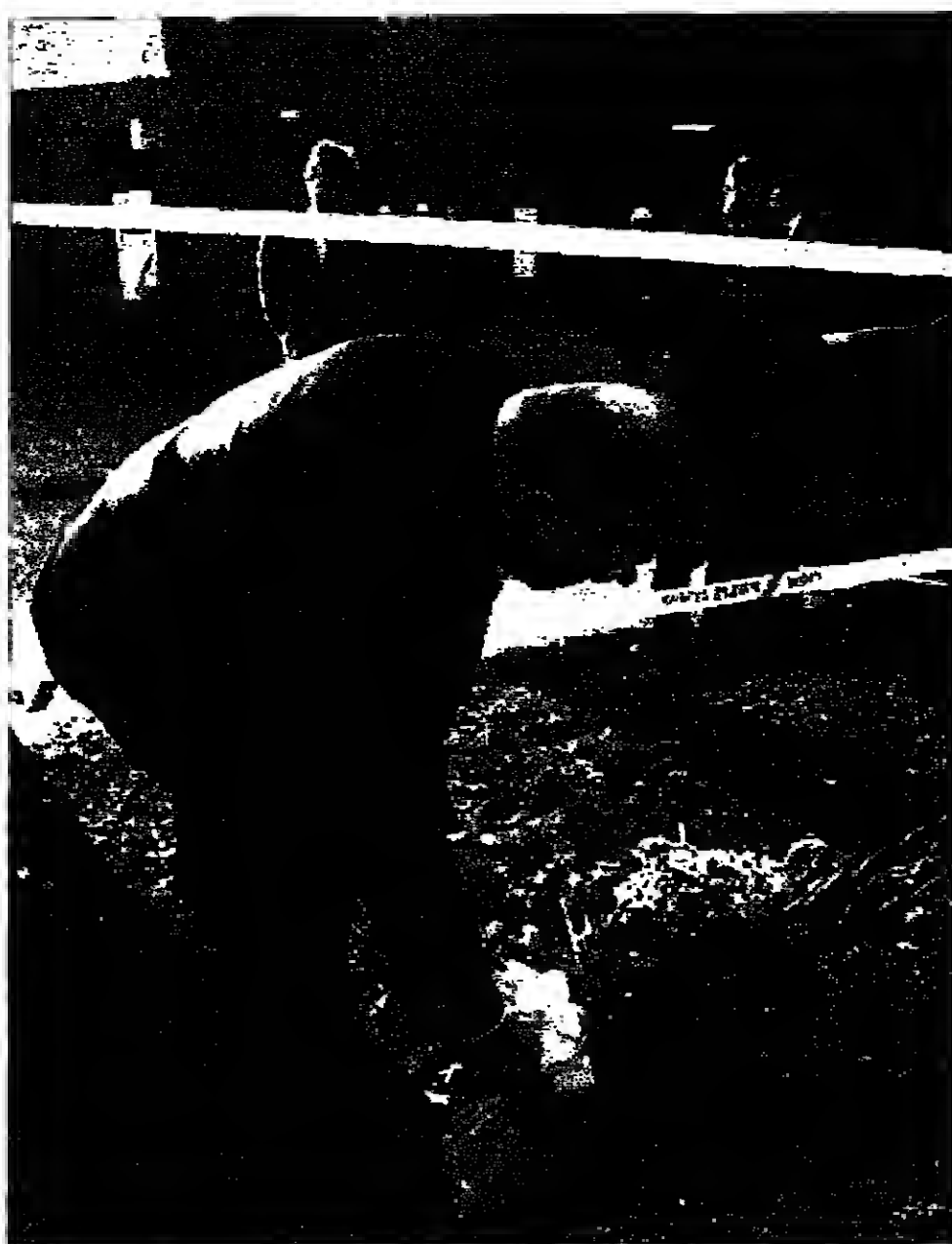
Teenagers who went back into the building managed to save about 40 of their friends, one witness said.

"I was outside the disco and heard bangs and then ran upstairs and saw smoke and people shouted and I saw them burning in the windows, some jumped out of the windows and broke their legs," Heresh Danesbvar told Reuters.

Private cars, taxis and buses took injured youngsters to local hospitals, which set up hotlines and crisis groups for relatives and friends of victims.

"We never thought something like this could happen in Sweden. This is probably the largest fire catastrophe we have ever had in Sweden," Olin said.

The centre where the Halloween disco was held is in a commercial district near the docklands of Gothenburg, Scandinavia's biggest port, on Sweden's west coast and about 480 km from Stockholm.



Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson lays a bouquet of flowers at the scene of a fire at an immigrants cultural centre Halloween dance which claimed the lives of at least 60 young persons. Police could not say if it was a racial attack but said several hundred youths aged between 13 and 20, both Swedes and immigrants, were at a Halloween dance at the Macedonian cultural centre when the fire started shortly before midnight (Reuters photo)

EU Commission takes states to court over U.S. open skies deals

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The European Commission has begun court action against eight EU countries which have struck individual "open skies" agreements with the United States, a Commission spokesman said Friday.

Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Luxembourg and Sweden all face the suit in the European Court of Justice.

The Commission deems that the separate accords will have a negative impact on the working of the deregulated civil aviation market in the European Union and that they violate EU law.

If the countries accept the Commission's mandate to negotiate an EU-wide aviation accord with the United

States, "there are always ways to suspend the action before the European Court of Justice," the spokesman said.

The Commission started legal action against the group of countries in 1995 and 1996, saying that the deals risked provoking a discriminatory situation against some EU countries.

The action was suspended in July 1996 after the EU council of ministers gave the Commission authorisation to act on behalf of all its members in negotiations on airport slots, reservation systems access and environmental protection.

But the Commission has now decided to reactivate the lawsuit to hammer out an agreement on the core issue: traffic rights.

Commissioner Neil Kinnock has said that individual countries unilaterally giving U.S. carriers permission to fly into the European Union in return for their airlines flying into the United States created serious distortions in terms of competition.

Kinnock says most EU countries now want the Commission to handle negotiations on traffic rights. His spokesman said the pursuit of separate bilateral talks "weaken the EU's position in any future negotiations and constitute another violation of community law."

The British government recently failed in an attempt to transform an existing air agreement into an "open skies" accord with the United States.

Tropical Storm Mitch weakens over C. America

SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras (R) — Tropical Storm Mitch, its winds weakened to 64 kph an hour Friday, unleashed a new round of killer floods and mudslides Thursday that consumed homes, businesses and farm fields.

Billed just days ago as the fourth strongest hurricane of the century, Mitch has been blamed for up to 50 deaths, about 30 of them in Honduras and the evacuation of more than 500,000 people across much of Central America.

"The situation on the Atlantic coast is totally chaotic, the damage is incalculable," said Lt. Col. Ansel Perez of Honduras's disaster prevention committee.

In neighbouring Nicaragua, 11 people were killed in mudslides Thursday, bringing Mitch's death toll in that country to 19, Red Cross officials said. Six other people were reported missing.

Honduran President Carlos Flores toured the devastation Thursday, visiting crowded shelters and promising aid. He viewed towns around San Pedro Sula where hundreds of houses lay nearly submerged by rising muddy waters.

"The danger is not over. The rain is supposed to continue at least another 48 hours," Flores said.

Heavy rains also forced thousands to be evacuated from their

homes in Nicaragua and Guatemala, and left an estimated 4,000 homeless in Costa Rica, officials said.

The U.S. National Hurricane Centre in Miami said Mitch could suddenly swerve west-northwest or northwest, taking it to the tip of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and into the oil-producing Gulf of Mexico.

The centre warned that if Mitch moved back over water, the storm could regain some of its strength.

At 4 a.m. EST (0900 GMT) the centre of the storm was 80 km south of La Ceiba, Honduras, according to the Hurricane Centre. With top wind speeds dropping Friday to 64 kph, it had weakened considerably from the rare Category Five hurricane it became Tuesday with "catastrophic" 295-kph winds capable of levelling concrete buildings.

Thursday, Mitch devastated the Honduran coast and the island of Guanaja, a popular tourist spot, with strong winds and heavy rain.

On nearby Roatan, another popular tourist island, winds of 169 kph blew off roofs, and high seas destroyed at least a dozen houses in the island community of Punta Gorda, according to Omar Anderson, a resident who spoke with Reuters by telephone from the island.

On the mainland coast, Mitch sent huge waves crashing onto

the shore, uprooted trees and knocked over light poles.

Farther away from Mitch's centre, days of rain turned the Chamelecon and Uluva Rivers into raging torrents near San Pedro Sula, an industrial city of 600,000, about 165 km north of the capital.

The flooded area in the lowland valley, stretching from San Pedro Sula north to the Atlantic coast, covered banana plantations and sugar cane fields. Local newspapers said half the area's banana crop had been lost.

By Thursday afternoon, most major roads out of San Pedro were covered with water and thousands of people were wading from their inundated towns, on foot or on bicycles, laden down with chickens, pigs, or bunches of green bananas.

Flood waters rose to within a few km of San Pedro Sula and officials said they feared parts of that city could be flooded.

Just west of San Pedro Sula, the flooding sent thousands of people fleeing into a huge tent camp set up along a highway.

"It came up incredibly fast. We had only 20 minutes to grab our stuff," said Manuel Cardona, a 46-year-old barber crouching in a makeshift tarpaulin tent with his wife, Maria Amalia, and their son, Jose.

Church groups were distributing drinking water, beans and tortilla pancakes to the homeless,

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia, U.S. pursue food aid talks

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian agriculture chiefs launched a second day of talks with U.S. counterparts Friday in an effort to thrash out a deal on food aid which could help the country avert hunger this winter, news agencies said. The team, headed by U.S. Department of Agriculture official Christopher Goldthwaite, met a Russian delegation led by Deputy Premier Gennady Kulik for talks which could gain Russia far more than a \$15-million aid package already pledged, Interfax reported. The agency cited sources close to the talks as saying a \$1-billion, 20-year loan to buy U.S. wheat and meat was on the table, and that Russia could soon import some six-to-eight million tonnes of U.S. wheat as a result. The U.S. embassy and Russian agriculture ministry could not comment on the substance of the talks. Russia's agriculture minister, Viktor Semyonov, said before talks began Thursday that the country was not facing food shortages this winter, and warned the West against using the argument as a pretext for "dumping" cheap imports on the Russian market. But analysts have pointed to Russia's poorest grain harvest in 40 years and slumping imports as a clear sign that Moscow could struggle to feed its far-flung regions this winter. The government itself has set up an emergency two-week food reserve to ensure people do not go hungry in coming months.

Three more aid convoys for Kosovo

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — International aid agencies said Friday they will send three humanitarian aid convoys to different regions of the troubled Kosovo province. The U.N. refugee agency (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and some non-government aid agencies will send convoys carrying food, hygiene kits and other necessities for southern regions around Surva Reka, Kisha Reka and the central Kosovo town of Glogovac. Anthea Webb of the WFP told AFP Monday and Tuesday, eight aid convoys were sent to the central, southwest and northern parts of the province. International aid officials said that the humanitarian situation in Kosovo was improving after Serb forces pulled out from many regions, allowing displaced persons to return to their villages.

Thousands watch as Taliban punish corrupt officials

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Thousands of people watched Friday as a bearded Taliban soldier beat three men who had been found guilty of taking bribes. The public beatings were in keeping with the Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law, which imposes public punishments, including capital punishment. The three men were brought to the grassy stadium and paraded before the crowds and their crimes read out. Before a soldier with a whip pulled them to one side and beat them, eyewitnesses said. Each man was given 36 lashes, as well as a six-month prison sentence. Abdul Wadood, one of the men who was punished, was an employee of the religious police, the department whose officers roam the streets publicly beating women who are outside their home without a male relative or are not wearing the all enveloping burqa. Wadood was found guilty of forging the signature of the defence minister on requisition slips. The other two men, Mir Qasim and Sher Jan, both were found guilty of taking the equivalent of \$35 in bribes. It wasn't clear what they gave in exchange for the money. The Taliban, whose origins are in the Islamic religious schools of Pakistan, adhere to a strict version of Islam. In the 90 per cent of the country under their control they have banned women from working and girls from going to school. They force men to wear beards and publicly beat anyone who shaves or trims his beard.

Japanese-Brazilian held for multiple rape

CHIBA, Japan (UPI) — Japanese police say they have arrested a 30-year-old Japanese-Brazilian on suspicion of raping or attempting to rape at least 18 women in Chiba Prefecture since last November. Police say the suspect was identified as Helio Hiroshi de Lima Amemiya, a factory worker and resident of Sakura, Chiba Prefecture, east of Tokyo. The victims were all residents of the same prefecture and ranged in age between 17 and 34. They say Amemiya tried to rape a 27-year-old woman at her home in July by threatening her with a knife, but the woman made a noise and he stopped the attack. Police allege that Amemiya would wait in front of the local train station, randomly target a victim and follow her home in his car. Later during the night, they said, he would sneak into the woman's home and threaten her with a knife. Amemiya was arrested July 22 after being caught in the act of trying to enter an apartment, police said, and his other crimes came to light during subsequent investigations.

Croats, Serbs wage cyber war on Internet

ZAGREB (R) — First they fought with guns, then they struggled with diplomacy, but now Croats and Serbs have moved their fight for supremacy into cyberspace. A group of Serb hackers called "Cma Ruka" (Black Hand) broke onto the web site of Croatian state-owned daily Vjesnik Wednesday evening, writing slogans like "We're fighting for the truth and for Serbia". Croatian hackers retaliated the next day, blocking the site of the Serbian National Library. Vjesnik reported Friday, "Read Vjesnik and not Serbian books", their message said. Vjesnik is closely-linked to the Croatian authorities and President Franjo Tudjman's government and ruling party. "This has nothing to do with politics. This is simply our reply to their propaganda. We wanted to show them we're better hackers," said a member of Croatian Mind Hackers who rang the daily Thursday night. "If they break into Croatian cyberspace one more time we'll hack their government's server," he said. Cma Ruka hackers gained publicity earlier this month when they entered the site of Kosovo Information Centre, run by ethnic Albanians who fight for independence from Serbia. Croatia gained independence from Serb-dominated Communist Yugoslavia in 1991 after fighting a war against its rebel minority Serbs.

Kenyan farmer injured trying to milk elephant

NAIROBI (R) — A young farmer was badly injured by an irate elephant after he tried to milk her while she was grazing with her calf, a Kenyan newspaper reported Friday. The Daily Nation said Peter Baraza, 21, crept up on the wild elephant near Lake Nakuru in Kenya's Rift Valley and managed to pull nearly a pint of milk before the cow realised it was not her calf that was suckling. The elephant tossed Baraza and his half-filled can in the air and pursued him as he scrambled, badly wounded, up a nearby tree. It then uprooted the tree with its trunk and waved it in the air with Baraza still clinging to the branches. The Daily Nation said the cow was finally distracted by a group of screaming women and Baraza was rescued and taken to hospital. The newspaper did not say why Baraza — who suffered broken ribs and a dislocated shoulder — tried to milk the elephant.

EU heads aim for consensus on global warming

LONDON (R) — The European Union will do whatever it can to forge international consensus on how best to fight global warming at next week's United Nations climate talks in Buenos Aires, EU officials said Friday.

But Europe should not be expected to broker deals between the United States and poorer countries on the key issue of voluntary cuts in harmful gas emissions, Peter Jorgensen, spokesman for the EU's executive Commission, told Reuters.

Environment ministers and leading climate experts from around the world will meet in Buenos Aires next week to map a course for industrialised countries as they rein in their emissions of greenhouse gases harmful to the earth's atmosphere.

"It is our opinion that industrialised countries are the ones who have created the problem (of global warming), so we will have to be the ones to solve it," Jorgensen said.

"We will certainly do all that we can to see that this process does not die, but it will not be the EU's role to

push the U.S. position onto developing countries," Jorgensen said.

The United States has said outright that it would ratify no international climate treaty without significant participation by developing countries, but Jorgensen said the EU hoped that hurdle could be overcome.

"We are not crossing the Atlantic to fight the Americans, we are crossing the Atlantic to fight the effects of climate change," Jorgensen said.

"We are not going to solve it the way the EU wants, or the way the Americans want, or the way the Russians want, we are going to solve it in a way upon which we can all agree," he said.

His comments preceded a formal statement issued Friday by EU Commissioner of the Environment Ritt Bjerregaard.

"There is nothing on the table that the European Union is not willing, able and ready to discuss, but a few principles must be borne in mind," Bjerregaard said.

"The industrialised countries need to demonstrate their willingness to go first,"

she said.

While the industrialised world is thought to have contributed more than two-thirds of emissions over the past century, new economies are expected to account for about two-thirds of emissions growth over the next 15 years.

China, which produces just over three billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2) annually and is expected to overtake the United States as the world's largest polluter within the same timeframe, fought fiercely against developing country commitments at last December's Kyoto conference.

Environmental groups have suggested that host country Argentina, as well as Brazil and perhaps South Korea, may be considering voluntary emissions cut announcements to help break the deadlock.

Bjerregaard said that without ratification by the United States and other leading polluters, reduction targets established within the U.N. Kyoto Protocol would be "gone with the wind."

"We simply can not allow this to happen," she said.

2 U.S. servicemen in custody in hit-and-run on Okinawa

TOKYO (AP) — Two U.S. servicemen were arrested in Okinawa on suspicion of injuring a man in a hit-and-run accident Friday, just weeks after a U.S. Marine was charged in an accident there that killed a teenager.

A Marine corporal and an Air Force staff sergeant were driving an official military van from Marine Camp Schwab that allegedly hit a man on a moped Friday morning, said spokesman Capt. Bret Curtis.

The man suffered a bruised band but no serious injuries. The two servicemen, accused of fleeing the scene of the accident in Naha, Okinawa's capital, were later arrested by Japanese police, Curtis said. Naha is 1,600 kilometres southwest of Tokyo.

The accident comes amid an edgy political climate on

the southern island since the death of 18-year-old Yuki Uema on Oct. 14 from injuries from the earlier accident.

U.S. Marine Cpl. Randall M. Eskridge, 23, of LaPorte, Indiana, has been charged with hit-and-run and drunken driving in the Oct. 7 accident. His trial has been set for Nov. 18. Residents of Okinawa, where most of the American troops in Japan are stationed, have long resented the U.S. military presence, and crime is an especially touchy issue.

"I ask that you do not judge the actions of all Americans here on these two individuals," Lt. Gen. Frank Libutti, the commanding general for the Marines in Japan, told reporters at a hastily called news conference on Okinawa.

"We will remain focused on educating and training all ser-

vice members on Okinawa to maintain high standards of discipline," he said.

Hiroshi Nonaka, Japan's chief government spokesman, was quoted by Kyodo News service as making a request to U.S. Ambassador Thomas Foley to ensure that the U.S. military enforce stricter discipline to prevent such accidents.

Foley has expressed condolences for the earlier hit-and-run and met with Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi.

The man hurt in Friday's accident, Hitoshi Nakaoji, a 27-year-old bank employee, was bruised when his small motorcycle turned over, Okinawa police spokesman Katsuya Matayoshi said.

The van also crashed into two parked cars and was later found abandoned in a parking lot a kilometre away.



Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji meets with European Commission President Jacques Santer (left) at Beijing's signing of a key international human rights treaty and European-Chinese dialogue to narrow differences (Reuters photo)

EC president meets China's top leader

BEIJING (AFP) — European Commission President Jacques Santer met Friday with Chinese President Jiang Zemin to cement sharply improving ties following a decade of confrontation over human rights.

Santer, making the first trip to China by an EC president since the crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square, hailed his encounter as "friendly and constructive" and said the visit reflected an overall upgrading of relations with China.

He said he had seen "improvements" in China's human rights record, despite a rash of recent detentions of dissidents.

Santer also said the two sides had agreed to forge ahead on China's long-awaited entry into the World Trade Organisation, on the condition that China made a "significant and substantial" improvement to its current offer.

"We stand ready to help bring the negotiations on China's accession to a suc-

cessful conclusion before the next round of multilateral trade negotiations is initiated," he said.

"To achieve this China would soon need to provide a significantly improved offer to open its market to foreign goods and services," he added.

Beijing has led a 12-year campaign to join the global trade body, saying the WTO suffers from excluding an economic and trading power of its importance. But all of its entry offers have been refused, on the grounds they do not provide adequate market opening, even though China protests that too high a price is being demanded of it.

Both the United States and Europe have recently expressed fears the grinding Asian financial crisis will reverse China's slow steps towards market opening, with Beijing increasing protectionism towards its domestic industries.

Commission deputy president Leon Brittan acknowledged the difficulties facing China and warned there had

been "no dramatic acceleration" in China's attempts to enter the WTO.

A decade of shaky ties between China and Europe — largely prompted by human rights concerns following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre — was finally put to rest in April when the two sides launched what they called a "global partnership" and agreed on the need for a greater counterweight to the U.S. domination of world decision making.

The imminent launch of the euro has also improved links, with China looking to the new European currency to offset its reliance on the U.S. dollar. "China supports the introduction of the Euro and has high hopes for the stability of the new currency," Zhu was quoted by Xinhua as telling Santer.

"We hope the euro will play a positive role in stabilising the international financial system," Zhu added. Santer, who is accompanied by commission vice president Leon Brittan, and monetary

affairs commissioner Yves-Thibault de Silguy, followed a stream of European premiers who have visited Beijing this autumn.

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern started the influx in mid-September, followed by French Premier Lionel Jospin, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen who have all declared much-improved ties with China.

Belgian Premier Jean-Luc Dehaene is scheduled to arrive Saturday, while Spain's Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar was also to have visited, but has put off his trip for political reasons back home.

Saturday, the European commission delegation will visit the central province of Hubei, devastated by the summer floods, and meet representatives of the Red Cross and the aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres. The delegation will also visit Shanghai and Hong Kong before returning to Brussels.

North Ireland Protestant militia's ceasefire move offers glimmer of hope

BELFAST (AFP) — Disappointment at the failure to meet Saturday's deadline for a key phase of the Northern Ireland peace process softened Friday after an extremist Protestant militia indicated a permanent ceasefire.

The Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), one of the most ruthless Protestant terrorist groups in Northern Ireland, promises a permanent end to violence and is willing to publicly destroy part of its arsenal, a spokesman told The Times newspaper.

The ceasefire move came amid gloom about the failure to meet the Oct. 31 deadline creating a local government in Ulster and a commune linking ministers from Belfast and Dublin because of a row over terrorist disarmament.

It confirmed by a formal statement from the LVF's eight-member "army council", it could herald a conclusive end to Protestant violence, responsible for around a third of the 3,500 deaths over 29 years of conflict.

The LVF declared a cease-

fire six months ago, but the government has so far not officially recognised the cessation of hostilities as genuine.

Recognition that a militia's ceasefire is genuine is a condition for its prisoners to be freed from jail early under the terms of Northern Ireland's historic April 10 peace accord.

The two large Protestant militias, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), have been on ceasefire since 1994.

The LVF offer to destroy weapons — conditional upon LVF prisoners being included in the early release scheme — could also encourage other terrorist groups to hand in their guns, mainstream Protestant politicians believe.

The Protestant head of the local government in Northern Ireland, David Trimble, has refused to form a government in which members of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, participate until the IRA begins surrendering its weapons.

Sinn Fein in turn has

accused Trimble of trying to sabotage the historic April peace settlement and warned of growing disillusionment among the pro-unionist Irish Roman Catholic community.

Thursday, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern warned of the possibility that the elected Northern Ireland assembly could remain marooned in a shadow existence "if the areas for the cross-border bodies' co-operation were not identified."

Under the April peace accord, the new Belfast executive was to have agreed by Saturday with the Dublin government at least 12 areas, including education, health and agriculture, for all-Ireland cooperation.

All the new institutions are due to be up-and-running by February next year.

The LVF spokesman interviewed by The Times said the LVF realised that Northern Ireland had massively backed the accord in a referendum in May, and there was no point in "defending people who don't wish to be defended."

To show its commitment,

the LVF would hand over weapons publicly in front of television cameras, he added.

The LVF, formed in 1996, soon established a reputation for ruthlessness, including the murder of a young Roman Catholic girl as she slept beside her Protestant boyfriend.

In December, after the murder of its leader Billy Wright inside Belfast's top-security Maze prison by a renegade Roman Catholic militia, the LVF launched a wave of retaliatory killings that left eight Catholics dead.

Its aim has been to defend, by terror, British rule over Northern Ireland against the Irish Republican Army and other pro-unionist Irish groups.

Wednesday, Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam told parliament she would consider declaring the LVF ceasefire genuine "within weeks" after a fresh security assessment.

She, however, is wary that the tactic may be a ploy to get its prisoners released early. The Times said,

Gingrich behind Republican campaign ads focusing on Clinton scandal

WASHINGTON (AFP) — House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich was behind a surprise Republican television ad campaign focusing on President Bill Clinton's sex scandal, The Washington Post said Friday.

The ad blitz launched one week before Tuesday's legislative elections was aimed at energising the Republicans' core supporters whose enthusiasm was waning after the Republicans lost the budget battle earlier this month and media interest in the Clinton sex scandal declined, Republican sources told the daily.

The \$10 million ad campaign marked an abrupt reversal for the Republicans, who pulled earlier scandal ads when public opinion turned against them.

The campaign features the

first direct assault by Republicans on Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky since polls showed a backlash against the party's Oct. 8 vote to open impeachment hearings against the president.

The ads, which obliquely refer to the sex scandal, were carefully put together to make sure they reached the Republicans' base without infuriating Democratic and swing voters, Rich Galen, an informal adviser to Gingrich told the daily.

One of the three 30-second spots shows January footage of Clinton — who confessed to the affair in August — wagging his finger at the camera and vehemently denying any "sexual relationship" with Lewinsky.

The narrator does not explicitly refer to the scandal but prods voters to

"Remember, it's your choice."

Another advertisement shows a young mother asking another: "What did you tell your kids?", then lamenting: "For seven months he lied to us."

The Republicans hoped the ad campaign would not draw much media attention, one Republican consultant told the daily. "They never intended for this to be an eight on the Richter scale."

A White House official however insisted the strategy appeared to be backfiring.

"Our polling shows this increases Democratic intensity," said White House political director Craig Smith.

The Republicans have an 11-seat edge in the House of Representatives, in which all 435 seats are up for a vote, and hold 55 seats in the 100-

member Senate, where 34 of the 100 seats are up for grabs. Republicans are expected to widen their advantage, as it is traditional for the party controlling the White House to suffer losses in midterm elections.

But smaller-than-expected gains could chasten them ahead of the launch of new impeachment hearings in coming weeks.

A Wall Street Journal/NBC news poll published Thursday gave the Democrats a three-percentage-point edge over Republicans among likely voters in the Nov. 3 midterm elections. The poll showed voters favour Democratic candidates over Republicans by a 46-43 per cent margin — reversing a four-point lead the Republicans enjoyed just one month ago.

Slovakia gets new government as strongman Meciar bows out

BRATISLAVA (AFP) — A new Slovak government took office Friday as authoritarian Slovak premier Vladimir Meciar, widely blamed for his country's failure to join the EU and NATO, resigned following a ballot defeat.

Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) leader Mikulas Dzurinda, who spearheaded the opposition victory, was formally appointed as the ex-Communist country's new prime minister at the head of a 30-member cabinet.

Meciar, whose Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) was defeated by a grouping of four opposition parties in elections last month, formally tendered his resignation in the opening session of Bratislava's new parliament.

Meciar has been seen as a key hurdle to Bratislava's entry to the European Union and NATO. European leaders

have expressed hope the new government can put Slovakia on the fast-track to EU entry.

The four opposition parties won some 60 per cent in the Sept. 25-26 ballots, against 26 per cent for the HZDS. Together they have 93 seats in the 150-seat single-chamber parliament.

Under a cabinet deal, the SDK has nine government posts, against six for the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), three for the Hungarian Coalition party (SMK) and two for the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP).

Of other key portfolios, Eduard Kukan (SDK) was named foreign minister. Pavol Kanis (SDL) defence minister and Ladislav Pittner (SDK) interior minister.

Sources said SOP leader Rudolf Schuster will be proposed by the new ruling majority for the country's

presidency, left vacant since March when head of state Michal Kovac ended his mandate with no elected successor.

SDL head Jozef Migaš was elected parliament speaker in the new parliament's opening day Thursday.

The Slovak election result has been welcomed with barely disguised satisfaction by foreign governments and the European Union.

Slovakia, which split from the Czech Republic in 1993, was snubbed for EU entry last year on political grounds. "We hope steps will be taken to improve the potential climate and address the problems concerning the political criteria that have so far kept Slovakia outside the negotiating process," said a European Commission spokesman.

The United States said Wednesday that the elections reflected a "desire of the

Slovak people for change."

"We urge all concerned to make the transfer of power to a new government in an orderly and expeditious manner," said U.S. State Department deputy spokesman James Foley.

Some Slovak analysts point out that this may not be the last of Meciar, who has a habit of bouncing back. He may be hoping that chronic divisions among the opposition parties could lead to fresh elections with a couple of years.

In his resignation announcement to the country's 5.5 million citizens, Meciar cited a traditional Slovak song saying: "I never did anything wrong, I never harmed a single one of you."

Commenting on the elections, Meciar said bitterly it was "the end of the Slovak way. This way was never defended by the forces which won these elections."

Charles, Camilla attend wedding — but apart

LONDON (R) — Prince Charles and his longtime lover Camilla Parker Bowles made front-page headlines Friday by going to a wedding — but it wasn't theirs and they arrived separately.

The pair made their first appearance in public together since Princess Diana's death in a Paris car crash last year when they attended a glittering society wedding.

But they were careful not to upstage the bride and groom and arrived 20 minutes apart at a London synagogue Thursday, thwarting photographers looking for a priceless shot to send around the world.

The nearest they got to the shot that photographers say

could be syndicated for £1 million (\$1.68 million) was the sight of their chauffeur-driven cars parked together outside.

Camilla arrived with her children Tom and Lara; Charles brought Prince Harry to the wedding of Simon Sebag-Montefiore and Santa Palmer-Tomkinson.

"Together ... but minutes apart," sighed the tabloid Mirror in its headline. Inside, the paper castigated the couple, saying: "The least they can do is stop messing about and treating us like idiots. They should have been side by side."

"Smiles apart" bemoaned the tabloid Sun, which also berated the camera-shy lovers, asking: "When, oh when, will Charles

and Camilla face the world together?"

"With military precision, they played cat and mouse with the media," said The Express, complaining that her big blue hat was wildly flamboyant.

"Absurdly, they did everything they could to avoid being pictured together."

But Charles, casting off his staid image and gradually emerging from the shadow of his glamorous ex-wife, is treading cautiously in his campaign to get Britons to accept his consort.

Opinion polls show his popularity soaring with more and more people accepting the relationship — even if most balk at the idea of Camilla ever becoming

his queen.

Camilla and Charles took the unprecedented step of issuing a joint statement Sunday, denying they had co-operated in a new royal biography which claimed Diana was the first to have an affair and accused her of making death threats to Parker Bowles.

Charles pleaded for privacy — both for him and his teenage sons, still struggling to come to terms with their mother's death.

And in a move that would have been unthinkable a year ago in a nation plunged into grief over Diana's death, Parker Bowles will next month host a 50th birthday party for Charles that is to be attended by fellow European royals.

Pinochet appeal likely to be heard this week

LONDON (AFP) — An appeal against a British High Court ruling quashing the arrest of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet is likely to be heard Wednesday and Thursday, a judicial spokesman said Friday.

The spokesman for the British justice department said that the date for the appeal — before a panel of five senior judges from the House of Lords, Britain's highest court — would be confirmed at the beginning of the week.

Wednesday the High Court in London ruled that British police had acted unlawfully in arresting Pinochet because he enjoyed immunity from prosecution as a former head of state.

But it ordered that the 82-year-old general be kept in detention pending appeals from prosecutors to the House of Lords.

If the House of Lords upholds the High Court ruling, Pinochet "would be a free man", the British prosecutor's office has confirmed.

The ruling would invalidate moves to extradite him to Spain and Switzerland and other countries seeking to question him about his military rule.

aturday, October 31, 1998

NS IN BRIEF

S. pursue food aid

— Russian agriculture chief says U.S. counterparts Friday want to buy food which could help ease famine in Russia. The Russian delegation led by the agriculture minister said the U.S. could buy U.S. wheat and other grains. The U.S. could also buy U.S. wheat and other grains. The U.S. could also buy U.S. wheat and other grains.

aid convoys for Kosovo

— International aid convoys for Kosovo province in the Balkans are being delayed by customs officials. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving.

ands watch as Taliban

ish corrupt officials

— The Taliban in Afghanistan are accused of being corrupt. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving.

panese-Brazilian held

for multiple rape

— A Japanese-Brazilian couple is being held for multiple rape. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving.

is. Serbs wage cyber

on Internet

— Serbs are waging cyber war on the Internet. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving.

Kenyan farmer injured

trying to milk elephant

— A Kenyan farmer is injured after trying to milk an elephant. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving. The U.S. and other countries are trying to get the aid convoys moving.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily, published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975
جريدة سياسية عربية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية

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E-mail: jortimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Shared responsibility

THE SUICIDE attack against an Israeli school bus in the Gaza Strip Thursday is precisely the kind of irresponsible act that moved Israelis further to the right and into the arms of hard-liners and extremists. On the eve of the last Israeli general election in 1996, Palestinian extremists carried a string of suicide bombings against Israeli civilians that effectively paved the way for the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister and for the right-wing parties to gain the upper hand in the Knesset. There should be no doubt in the minds of Palestinians that the consequences of all such bombings have worked against their national interest. The continuation of this strategy of violence would therefore be an act of extreme folly that stands to hurt the Palestinians more than anyone else.

No wonder the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has moved more forcefully in the wake of the latest suicide attack than on all previous occasions to arrest several Hamas activists including putting the group's spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin under house arrest. Palestinian extremists obviously share the same agenda with Israeli hard-liners and thus should be contained and stopped from damaging the overall interests of peace for which moderates on both sides are working.

In retrospect it was the ill-conceived and ill-measured commando attacks against Israel that led to the disastrous wars in 1956 and 1967, when the Arabs were clearly unprepared for a major war. Whether the Arab side decides to wage war or make peace, the decision should be taken by the central government and not groups which operate outside its authority. It is a simple equation — compare the heavy costs of such irresponsible actions with their minuscule political and military advantages.

That is why the PNA is indeed duty bound to exercise full authority over all actions that emanate from the territories under its control. Israel must not be served additional excuses on a silver platter to frustrate every peace agreement that may lead the Palestinians closer to their aspirations. At the same time Israel must also contain and control its own extremists who have already played havoc with the peace process and even threatened the life of Netanyahu because he accepted in principle to withdraw marginally from Palestinian lands. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated because he wanted to make peace with the Arabs. Extremists will stop at nothing to achieve their aims. The enemies of peace whether in Israel or the Arab side must therefore be fought at all levels.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Tareq Massarwah hailed the prime minister's decision to suspend the sale of the government's stake in the Jordan Telecommunications Company. Privatisation is a new trend in the world, but what is the use of privatising the JTC while the Cabinet makes the decisions, pondered Massarwah. He suggested that the company's assets be evaluated, its budget be made public, and its shares be floated on the Amman Stock Exchange. He said Jordanian banks are saturated with money, the Central Bank floats shares with tens of millions of dinars a year, he said. What do we need a strategic foreign partner for: the money or the technology, the writer asked. He said the country has enough money to furnish such an operation, and modern technology is available to whoever wishes to pay for it. Besides, what guarantee is there that after the strategic partner buys the government's share, he will not sell it in two years time, asked Massarwah.

Al Dustour's editorial commented on the recent car explosion in Israel and predicted that the incident will pass without affecting the implementation of the Wye River accord. The Arabic daily expected that similar incidents will take place in the coming few weeks in a bid to destroy the long-awaited deal signed between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The paper said both the Palestinian activists and the Israeli extremists will undertake such sabotage to halt Israeli redeployment from the West Bank. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was put under pressure after the explosion, and forced to arrest Hamas leaders, said the paper, and cautioned the PNA to be very careful when dealing with such incidents coinciding, and not to bow to Israeli extortion to avoid greater split among the Palestinians themselves.

Jordanian Perspective

Another nail in the coffin

Dr. Musa Keilani

WE HAVE heard that the latest Israeli-Palestinian agreement signed in Wye as a major breakthrough in the Middle East peace process. Almost everyone is jubilant except the Palestinians, and the U.S. media described it as perhaps the most important agreement after the Camp David accords signed by Egypt and Israel.

The media hype that the Wye negotiations and the signing of the agreement received gave the world the impression that Israel and the Palestinians have settled all their differences and agreed to make eternal peace, and everything is fine and dandy in the Middle East from now on.

But what many unfamiliar with the Middle East fail to realise is that is a concerted effort indeed not to expose the reality that the agreement did not make any new ground. Israel has only agreed to give the Palestinians a fraction of what it was supposed to offer under the Oslo agreements. In return, the Palestinians have agreed to undertake draconian measures against Palestinian opposition to Israeli-dictated solutions and towards formally giving up the very essence of Palestinian rights.

It is not as if Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat had a choice at Wye, where he confronted nothing but no-win situations coupled with American and Israeli pressure wherever he turned. And, given his obvious anxiety to shore up what he sees as the nucleus of Palestinian nationalism — the self-rule authority — rather than wasting time trying to change the fundamentals of the game, Arafat chose to sign the dotted line.

We in Jordan would have been the first to rejoice and hail the Wye deal as a dramatic breakthrough if it meant that Israel agreed to negotiate genuine peace in the Middle East on the basis of respect for the legitimate political and territorial rights of the Palestinian people.

The importance of the extent of the territory it would return to the Palestinians would have taken a step back against the accep-

ance of the truth that the peace process would continue to remain muddled up as long as Netanyahu sought to force his version of a solution down the Palestinian throat.

The Wye accord would indeed have been the biggest breakthrough in the Middle East peace process if it had outlined the technical stages of negotiations towards an agreement which would not compromise the very essence of the Palestinians cause. Instead it only hammered in another nail in the coffin of Palestinian aspirations by imposing conditions on behaviour and restricting the very scope of a final agreement.

It would not have really mattered whether Israel would hand over 10 per cent or 13.1 per cent of West Bank land to Palestinian control if the light at the end of the tunnel was Palestinian independence and statehood and what was left in be discussed was the technical aspects of an Israeli withdrawal from the territory in the spirit of the land-for-peace formula.

Quite simply, the Wye agreement serves Israel's purpose of perpetuating its physical and political control of the Palestinian territories as a whole while using the Palestinian self-rule authority to quell Palestinian nationalist sentiments, whether hard-line or moderate.

The only element which made any sense at all during the signing of the ceremony was the emphasis and glittering tribute all leaders gave in His Majesty King Hussein's unwavering commitment to peace. The King's passionate appeal to all to rise above differences for the sake of the people they represent and future generations spoke for itself.

Regardless of whether it was made at Wye or far detached from the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, what the world heard from the King was not simply the wisdom of the decades of his daily battles with the problems of the Middle East. It was the conviction of a soul and spirit which has risen far above narrow political interests and is able to see the conflict and situation

in a much broader context and perspective that is not limited to the pros and cons of the Wye agreement.

The King received the highest accolade for his contribution to giving the Wye negotiations that much-needed extra nudges wherever they were needed, including that make-or-break moment where Israel was holding out for the release of its convicted spy in the U.S.

Seen in the framework of what the King has always stood for and continues to stand for, the lofty words of praise he has received and would receive in the future would never be enough, because living up to the noble concept of justice for all is the best tribute anyone can pay in his universal commitment to peace.

We saw very little, if any at all, so far of any such commitment on the part of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is obviously more preoccupied with protecting his skin and salvaging his political career than giving moderation, justice and fairness any serious thought.

If anything, he has asserted after Wye that there will be no freeze in Israeli settlement building in the West Bank, including Arab East Jerusalem, no swift release of Palestinian prisoners and no follow-up action on the Wye accord until the Palestinian self-rule regime met certain conditions. These assertions tell the U.S. that the Israeli prime minister has not picked up a iota of the message that the King was sending in his short speech at the signing ceremony.

While the King's noble sentiments for universal peace and justice have added to Jordanians' pride in their beloved Monarch and in themselves, we cannot but pity our neighbours, the Israelis, that their leader is taking them to the brink of disaster if only because of his narrow vision and political priorities. And disaster it would be, in the medium-term if not in the short-term, if he continues to believe that stalling tactics and stop-gap solutions lead to security and peace for his people.

Out of Order

Millennium jitters in the Holy Land

THERE IS a frenzied race against the clock in Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) involving massive sums of money and time. Specialised teams, under the supervision of the most knowledgeable and capable directors, are working night and day to meet a rapidly approaching deadline. Even the media in the respective countries have been recruited to help ensure the success of the vital, and sometimes competing, projects under way.

You may think I am describing the fight against "terrorism." Implementation of the Wye agreement or an intensive public relations campaign to explain how "cooperation" with Turkey does not equal "ties," but I'm not. The focus, in fact, of these Herculean efforts is the drive to attract religious tourists to the celebrations marking the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. And while Jordan, Israel and the PNA won't be in a position to offer salvation to the wayward soul, they are all working to provide an atmosphere in which miracles, such as the Healing of the Tourist's Waller, Tourism Industry Resurrection and the Feeding of the 5,000 at Hashem, will truly happen.

Each country has its own areas relating to the life and times of Jesus and is working feverishly to promote them. The PNA boasts Bethlehem, where it all began, as well as other areas of biblical importance such as Hebron and Jericho. Israel, for its part, counters Bethlehem with Nazareth, where Jesus spent a large part of his youth, and throws in the Sea of Galilee and Megiddo, leading contender for the privilege of hosting Armageddon, to boot. Jordan, not to be outdone, offers Christian visitors the chance to be baptised at the same spot as Jesus as well as

the chance to view the scene where a herd of demon-possessed swine leaped off a cliff to their death.

But despite the fervour of the three hosts-to-be, there are some questions and odd bits associated with all the preparations. At Megiddo, the Israeli tourism authorities are reportedly installing holographic video screens depicting a futuristic, end-of-the-world battle. I haven't seen reports of which parties will be portrayed in this conflict, but I feel confident in predicting that Israel will be the winner. If this is the case, I recommend that the Israeli authorities make the losing side Mongolia, or perhaps another far away country, in order to avoid offending any neighbouring state.

In the PNA areas, tourists who have had too much holiness for one day can head for the new casino and indulge in a little sin. The possibilities of an endless cycle of "sin and repent" are ripe, and I can see several long-term guests in Palestinian towns. Perhaps they can also open a branch of Gamblers Anonymous as another source of income?

Unfortunately, Jordan has some unanswered questions concerning preparations for the 2000th anniversary of Jesus' birth floating around. One immediate one is what is going to happen when all the Year 2000 tourists leave? Will there be enough normal tourists in support the planned increase in hotels and other facilities? Can the Jordanian tourism industry continue developing to attract visitors for something other than a once-in-a-millennium event? These questions and others have already been raised but the answers may have to wait.

But all the work going in to attract visitors and their hard-earned money may not come to much. There have been per-

sistent warnings about the end of the world at many points in the past, and now that the second Christian millennium is drawing to a close, new predictions of Earth's imminent demise are being issued. The planners directing the tourism boards around the region might do well to take these forecasts into consideration when devising long-term programmes or working to ensure sustainable growth.

But I, for one, am not worried. Following a re-reading of certain books using a new scientific method I personally devised, I have found a way to avoid any peril resulting from earth-ending events. I can't provide too many details about it right now, but let's just say that the plan involves certain space-bound vehicles. Unfortunately, as the saying goes, there's no such thing as a free lunch. This information is going to cost people who want to be in the know, to the tune of about \$150 per week. Contributions can be sent directly to me, care of the newspaper. I feel confident that most rational persons, after comparing my method of dealing with the end of the millennium to those of various official tourism boards, will take me up on my generous offer.

RECOMMENDED READING: Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, by Hunter S. Thompson. Good luck finding this book here. The novel tells the story of a journalist and his lawyer on an assignment covering a motor-cross rally and a police convention. There are certain other details in the book that I am omitting due to concerns over propriety, but don't let that scare you away. Fear and Loathing well earns its second title, A Savage Journey into the Heart of America.

October 28 poll shows Middle East issues top Arab American political concerns

IN THIS election year where all signs are pointing to a significantly low voter turnout, a small but concentrated and motivated constituency can make a difference in some key races.

Although Arab Americans are only one per cent of the nation, they are highly concentrated in a few geographical areas and have in recent years demonstrated heightened activity in U.S. politics. For example, the Arab American Institute/ANA TV Network, Inc. exit polling in the 1996 presidential elections showed that 61 per cent of Arab American registered voters participated in the elections; a number which compared favourably with the 49 per cent average nationwide.

The national Arab American registered voter database shows that Arab American voters are well represented in 55 congressional districts across the United States. In those districts Arab Americans range from between 1.5% to 4.5% of the total voting population. 10 of these 55 districts are among this years more competitive races, including Michigan's 12th district (Levin), Pennsylvania's 15th district (McHale, open), and California's 24th district (Sherman).

37 per cent of the Arab Americans polled were registered Democrats, 24 per cent were Republicans and 15 per cent declared themselves Independent. However, when asked how they intended to vote in this year's congressional elections, 53 per cent indicated preference for a Democratic candidate while only 29 per cent supported a Republican.

Arab American activity in politics goes beyond voting. 41 per cent of the Arab American voters polled have contributed to a political candidate, while 22.5 per cent indicate that they have worked on a political campaign.

The Arab American voters polled have strong views on the current crisis in Washington, expressing support for the President in numbers roughly paralleling the rest of the U.S. public.

38 per cent say that the President should be left alone, while 19 per cent say that the President should be censured but remain in office. Thus, a total of 57 per cent would see the President finishing his term. This contrasts favourably with the 37.5 per cent who indicated a desire to see the President removed from office (21% favouring impeachment and 16.5% per cent favouring resignation).

The Middle East is of great importance to Arab American voters. When asked how important a Senate or congressional candidate's Middle East position would be in winning their vote, 64 per cent stated that it was important, with only 17 per cent saying that it was unimportant.

Arab Americans voters feel this concern for the Middle East because of strong familial ties with the region. Although two-thirds of the Arab Americans polled were born in the United States, 46 per cent have travelled to the Middle East and over two-thirds have family and friends in the Arab World.

Other issues specific to Arab Americans that ranked high in their concerns:

	Important	Not Important
Civil Rights of Arab Americans	91	3.5
The Rights of Palestinians	85.5	3.5
Keeping Immigration Open & Fair	82.5	4.5
Protecting Lebanese Sovereignty	84	10.5
Human Rights in the Arab World	80	7.5
Supporting Arab Americans in Elections	76	8
The status of Jerusalem	75	11

Among these issues, the question of civil rights ranks the highest, possibly because a disturbingly large number of Arab Americans (31%) actually report that they "have been discriminated against because of [their] Arabic ancestry."

As the numbers indicate Arab Americans have strong views, as well, about a number of critical Middle East issues.

In addition to the data above, the poll also shows that 80 per cent of Arab Americans agree that there should be a Palestinian state, with only 12 per cent disagreeing. At the same time 74 per cent feel that Israel has a right to exist, with only 14 per cent disagreeing. There is a strong consensus (cutting across all the different component groups within the community) on this issue and the issues of civil rights, Jerusalem, Lebanon and human rights in the Arab World. The only issue on which there is not a community-wide consensus is on the question of ending the economic sanctions against Iraq. On this issue 46 per cent of the Arab Americans polled would agree with ending the sanctions while 42 per cent would not.

With regard to U.S. policy in the Middle East, 72.5 per cent feel that the policy is biased toward Israel. A slightly more positive view is held of the Clinton Administration's handling of the Middle East peace negotiations. 53 per cent hold a favourable view of the Administration's work, while 31 per cent do not.

All eyes still on Wye

Reviewed by
Mohammad Ben Hussein

Columnists last week focused their attention on the Wye River accord signed between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel, and the participation of His Majesty King Hussein, who helped bridge the gap between the two parties.

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said the deal sealed between Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not need to be submitted to the Israeli Knesset or to the cabinet for approval, because the deal is a memorandum to what already have been approved in Oslo accords. Netanyahu wants to submit the deal to the Knesset and the cabinet in order to further delay implementing the accord, said Rimawi.

He said it is likely that early elections in Israel will take place, which will also serve to delay implementation. The writer said Israel can find plenty of reasons to hinder implementation, and called on the Palestinian National Authority not to rush and implement the accord hastily until Israel shows some kind of commitment.

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek expressed his satisfaction with the interim deal and claimed that the deal has pushed the peace process back on the road. Had the deal not been brokered, said Fanek, violence and bloodshed would arbitrate between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and unrest in the Palestinian territories can only have negative consequences for Jordan. The deal has proved that peace is stronger than hard-liners on both sides, said Fanek, even though the new deal just reaffirmed what was included in Oslo accord. The involvement of the United States will mean that Israel can no longer claim that the PNA is not taking the necessary measures to crack down on Palestinian activists, said Fanek.

Al Dustour's Yasser Zaatra said that the recent deal will be similar to all deals signed before with the Jewish state, in that it is up to Israel to implement the accord, he said. History has shown, that Israel can never be put under pressure by any power in the world, and it can easily renege on any agreement it has signed. The Wye River accord is not comprehensive

enough, because it does not address the issue of prisoners — the Palestinians have only received promises to release detainees in Israeli jails — and the section on the airport included only security measures under Israeli control. The writer expected that within the next few weeks Israel will start procrastinating, and the Oslo scenario will be repeated. Zaatra added that Israel understands the fact that peace is the only solution, because it does not want to "manage another nation's affairs any more."

Al Dustour's Oreib Rintawi commented on the implications of the Wye River accord revealed by the speeches delivered at the signing ceremony. The project of "greater Israel," is over after Netanyahu joined the political left.

Israel in accepting the idea of sharing the "land of Israel" with another nation. The idea of the creation of a Palestinian state became more realistic after Israel allowed the PNA control of 40 per cent of the West Bank, an airport, the port, and safe passage. President Bill Clinton will address the Palestinian Legislative Council within the next few weeks, said Rintawi, and this symbolic step indicates willingness on behalf of the U.S. to start dealing with the Palestinian entity on a par with neighbouring states, and thus, according to Rintawi, is a step forward in recognising the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle.

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said the interim deal is very important for several reasons. Netanyahu has, for the first time, accepted Israeli troop redeployment from the West Bank as stipulated by the Oslo accords, something he always rejected, even if agreed upon by previous Israeli governments. Secondly, the United States has accepted to continue sponsoring the talks after threatening to suspend its participation during the deadlock. The Lewinsky affair pushed Clinton into pressuring Israel and the Palestinians to reach an agreement in order to repair his tarnished image, said Rimawi. Thirdly, His Majesty King Hussein contributed to the success of the talks, which is a victory for Jordan, and finally, the deal has paved the way for the peace talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, said Rimawi.

Week
in
Print

Saturday, October 31, 1998
Dr. Musa Kel...

Rabin widow assails Netanyahu three years on

By Howard Goller
Reuters

THREE YEARS after Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, his widow has blasted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the shape of Israel's ties with the Palestinians and for the scorn she says he still heaps on her husband. Speaking days before the anniversary of the Israeli leader's murder, Leah Rabin welcomed the new land-for-peace deal that Netanyahu forged with Yasser Arafat, but she regretted it was sealed in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Mrs. Rabin, 70, will not forgive Netanyahu for creating what she insists was the atmosphere that prompted Yigal Amir, a young religious Jew opposed to peace moves, to shoot her husband twice in the back at a Tel Aviv rally on November 4, 1995.

"There are things that you cannot forgive," said the widow remembered for her composure during his funeral, attended by leaders from around the world. This year, like Israel itself, the Rabins would have celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

Interviewed at her office, a room crowded with paintings, photos and sculptures of her

husband, Leah Rabin told Reuters she often wished she could talk to him now and felt it her duty to defend him from Netanyahu's attacks.

"We aren't in the habit of arguing with Mrs. Leah Rabin," Netanyahu's office said when asked to respond to her charges.

Rabin's widow receives invitations to commemorations and other events from all over the world. Letters come non-stop.

People of all sorts say they identify with her loss. Not long ago a tall and handsome man approached her in New York.

"I admired and loved your husband," he said, shaking her hand. "and I am from Iraq" — a country formally at war with Israel.

She feels a sense of guilt that Israelis did not take seriously the warnings that a Jew might kill her husband.

But she said any "meshuganeh" — or "crazy" — who took aim at an Israeli prime minister today would likely fail because of

tightened security. "There can always be another Yigal Amir. However the prime minister is totally, totally, totally differently protected now... Even if there is a Yigal Amir, I don't think he has such a chance as this Yigal Amir had," she said.

having planned to give the Palestinians 92 per cent of the West Bank land which Israel captured in the 1967 Six-Day War, thus putting the country at risk.

'The Palestinians want peace. They deserve peace. They are entitled to have peace — as much as we want and are entitled to have peace'

This week's headline rightwingers, angry at the new peace deal, branded Netanyahu a "traitor" and a "liar" at a protest outside his Jerusalem home, reviving memories for Leah Rabin of the insults hurled at her husband before his murder.

She still holds Netanyahu, then the leader of the opposition Likud Party, responsible for the mood three years ago. The assassin Yigal Amir was even something of a victim, brainwashed by a climate of incitement, she said.

When they came to power seven months after the murder, most Likud members dropped their opposition to the land-for-peace policy that her husband, an ex-army chief, put into action when he and Arafat reached across decades of conflict in 1993 to seal a breakthrough deal on the White House lawn, she said.

Nonetheless, Netanyahu has gone on making what she says are unfounded charges against Rabin, accusing his Labour Party of

Israel so far has committed to giving up 40 per cent of the West Bank — more than 13 per cent of it by Netanyahu — and more stands to be given up in talks yet to be completed.

"I don't think there was ever an intention from my husband and his cabinet and his government to return one inch beyond 50 per cent. So what is this talk now about 92 per cent that has no anchor in any kind of reality?" Rabin said.

"Whoever intended to go back to the Six-Day War borders? My husband was the commander of the Israeli army during the Six-Day War... Time and again he emphasised we shall compromise on the land (but) we shall not return to the Six-Day War borders."

She said Netanyahu, on his return from the U.S. summit where he negotiated last week's accord with Arafat, had since served up more of an attack on her husband than a defence of the deal.

Rather than presenting the agreement on its merits, she said, Netanyahu had sold it as having minimised the dangers of the Oslo peace process which he reluctantly inherited from Rabin.

"The man's dead, he was murdered due to this kind of incitement. They murdered him and now I hear all over again they incite against him and his agreement, that he neglected the defence of the people of Israel," she said.

"Yitzhak Rabin, the soldier of 27 years, the minister of defence of eight, nine years, he neglected the security? I think that the security was number one on his agenda when he was negotiating the peace." Despite public reassurances that all would be well,



Leah Rabin at her husband's funeral three years ago (file photo)

Netanyahu came home with a U.S.-brokered deal that she said was already showing signs of faltering. On Thursday Netanyahu's cabinet delayed a vote on it for lack of a Palestinian security plan.

"There are a lot of unclear parts in this agreement, very unclear. He always talks about the 'horrible' Oslo agreement as being like Swiss cheese with holes. I say this agreement is like a fisherman's net — with very many holes," she said.

She hoped the deal nonetheless would hold, backed in parliament by her husband's Labour Party.

Insisting she had to speak her mind, even if some Israelis disliked what she had to say, Leah Rabin reserved her strongest criticism for Netanyahu's approach to the Palestinians. What was missing, she said, was a commitment to reconciliation.

"How do you make peace with people that you constantly tell how dangerous they are, how you suspect them, all kinds of measures they have to take in order to secure this agreement? And standing there in the press conference and saying, 'If they give, they'll get' — this is not a language to make peace. This is not a peace process," she said.

"Why draw a picture that the Palestinians are a threat to our existence? I mean this is such nonsense. They are not. They want peace. They deserve peace. They are entitled to have peace — as much as we want and are entitled to have peace."



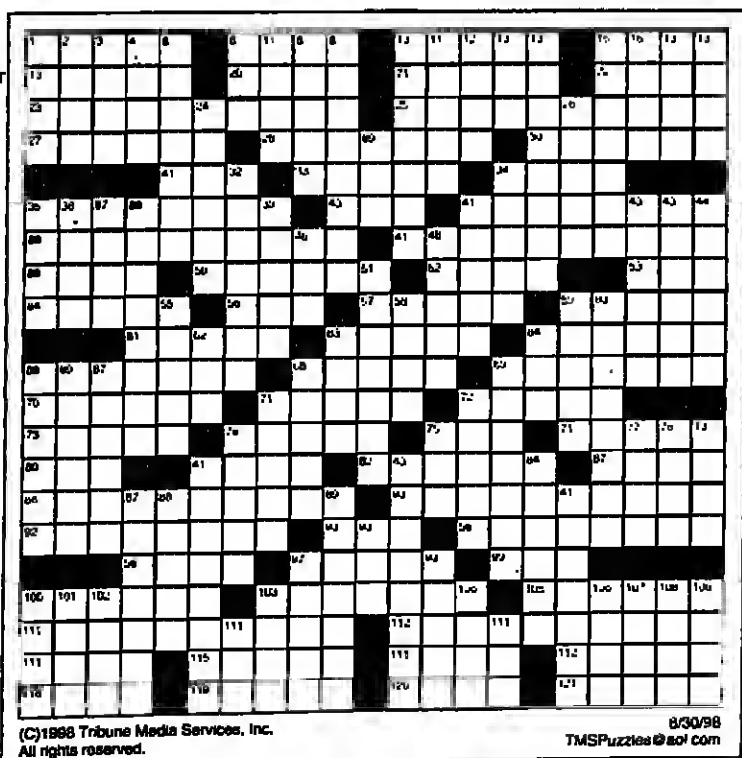
Young Israelis hold one of the torchlight vigils held all over the country in memory of assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, ahead of the third anniversary of his death. The Israeli leader was killed by religious Jew Yigal Amir at the end of a Tel Aviv peace rally November 4, 1995 (Reuters photo)

The Saturday Crossword

PARTICIPLES ON PARADE

By Bernice Gordon, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- ACROSS
- 1 Embarrass
 - 6 Wanes
 - 10 Cause anxiety
 - 15 Manipulated
 - 19 Gossip's source
 - 20 Wallowing wind
 - 21 "The Hobbit"
 - 22 Celestial explosion
 - 23 Blue
 - 25 Accepting
 - 27 Humiliating defeat
 - 28 Injuried
 - 29 Eminent conductor
 - 30 Obtained
 - 31 Neighbor of Syr.
 - 33 Moves at a quick pace
 - 34 Memento (reminder of mortality)
 - 35 Lacks
 - 40 Mimic
 - 41 Barbecue
 - 45 Cooperating
 - 47 Prettifying
 - 49 Units of work
 - 50 Parent, for example
 - 52 Shallowward
 - 53 College seniors' test abbr.
 - 54 Give a face-lift
 - 55 Gaudier of "Mogambo"
 - 57 Brief, dash notices
 - 58 Gaze
 - 61 "A Visit from St. Nicholas" poet
 - 63 Knitting stitches
 - 64 Poinard a finger at
 - 65 High-fiber ingredient
 - 66 Fireside yarns
 - 68 Chinese religiousist
 - 70 Fairy-tale villain
 - 71 Kind of sandwich
 - 72 Soviet collective
 - 73 Domesticated
 - 74 W. Hemisphere protection syst.
 - 75 One, II
 - 78 Vowed
 - 80 Creative skill
 - 81 Relative of an
 - 82 Respect
 - 83 Exam compositions
 - 85 Branding tool
 - 86 Standing by
 - 90 Indecently
 - 92 Lawyer
 - 93 Night flyer
 - 94 Bad uns
 - 95 Actor Julia
 - 97 Mr. T's outfit
- DOWN
- 1 "Romeo (Italian car)"
 - 2 Africaner
 - 3 "A Death in the Family" author
 - 4 Missile shelter
 - 5 Sailing
 - 6 Coop item
 - 7 Aromatic unguent
 - 8 Backhoe inflated
 - 9 Sanitation system
 - 10 Aided in crime
 - 11 Truth twisters
 - 12 Polo CA
 - 13 Snuggler's stal
 - 14 Snake-killing mammal
 - 15 Amusement
 - 16 Alphabetize
 - 17 Bachmanian cry
 - 18 Daily start
 - 24 Winston Cup circuit
 - 26 Russian writer
 - 29 Saturate
 - 32 Study anew
 - 34 Hebrew lawgiver
 - 35 Teen follower?
 - 36 Prop or charger
 - 37 Indication
 - 38 Coordinating outfit
 - 39 Dry, white wine
 - 41 B.C. Europeans
 - 42 Singer Leslie
 - 43 Corner tower
 - 44 Proceeds quickly
 - 45 Gun-owners' lobby
 - 46 Train tracks
 - 48 Drum roll
 - 55 Plane
 - 56 British gun
 - 59 Blackthorn berries
 - 60 Plane pusher?
 - 62 New World grp.
 - 63 Sunscreen ingredient
 - 64 Night flyer
 - 65 City on the Rhine
 - 66 Mammal aquatic organism
 - 67 Smell bird
 - 68 Prop or charger
 - 69 Pie in
 - 70 Cooperstown
 - 71 Copy
 - 72 Distinct Ntn
 - 74 Actor Conrad
 - 75 G.I. entertainment unit
 - 77 Asana
 - 78 Newspaper section, once
 - 79 Adam's grandson
 - 81 Subtle implication
 - 83 Splash of liquid
 - 84 Pollen-baiting
 - 87 organ
 - 88 Malodorous
 - 89 Tchernobyl resident
 - 90 Mammal aquatic organism
 - 91 Intuition
 - 94 Sebaceous cyst
 - 97 Actress Woodward
 - 98 Smuckers
 - 100 Grand cage
 - 101 Window element
 - 102 Web location?
 - 103 For both sexes
 - 104 No. in Russia
 - 105 Popeye's Poo
 - 107 Pinta's sister ship
 - 108 Customary extras, briefly
 - 109 Syngman of South
 - 111 European nat.
 - 113 Saloon rocks?

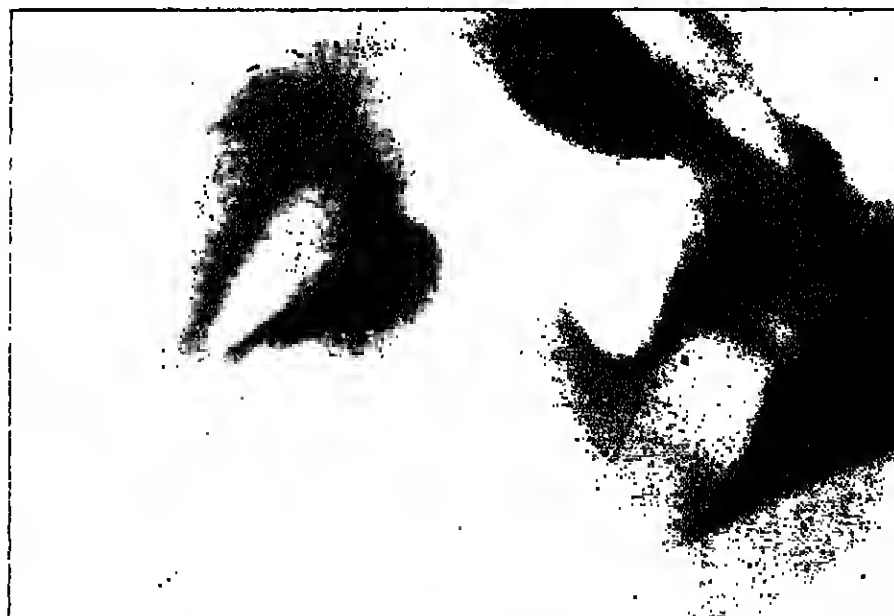


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THE ARAB CENTRE FOR HEART AND SPECIAL SURGERY



Advanced Fertility Unit

On the occasion of opening the Advanced Fertility Unit, the Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery will host the medical infertility team of the European Hospital in Italy as of 20.11.1998. The team is headed by

Dr. Peter Zsolt Nagy

Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology and a pioneer of the ICSI technique in Belgium. During his stay, the team will be applying the latest techniques used for in vitro fertilisation (test tube babies) and assisted reproduction.



For further details and appointments please contact the Advanced Fertility Unit at: (Tel.: 5921199 - Ext. 200, Fax: 5921282)

Thomson Bank Watch sets Jordan B+ sovereign rating

AMMAN (R) — U.S. financial services firm Thomson Watch Thursday assigned a B+ sovereign risk rating for Jordan with a stable outlook saying that despite the country's slow growth it was progressing in structural reforms.

"Despite the slow growth experienced by the Jordanian economy, the country is moving along with the ambitious programme of structural reforms centred on export and tourism promotion and supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the international community," said Kamal Shehadi, vice president, in a statement sent to Reuters.

The rating puts Jordan on par with Brazil, Lebanon and Peru and one notch below Turkey and El Salvador, the rating agency said.

Shehadi said Jordan had also benefited from steps to reduce significantly its external debt burden, currently around \$6 billion, through "debt forgiveness, debt conversion and debt rescheduling."

"Successful governments have demonstrated their ability to raise addi-

tional revenue and to control the growth of expenditure," Shehadi said.

But the rating agency said the last two years of slow growth has "diverted the government from meeting its fiscal target and has exacerbated a very serious unemployment problem."

The U.S. bank risk agency, referring to Jordan's poor track record in privatisation, said Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh's government appeared more determined "to overcome technical hurdles and political opposition to privatisation."

But Thomson Bank Watch said the government's determination hinged on two major deals, the sale of a 40 per cent stake in the state owned telecoms firm, Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) and the debt-ridden state airline Royal Jordanian.

The government, in its first major step to privatise state holdings, concluded last week a deal with French Lafarge S.A. to sell a major 33 per cent of Jordan Cement Factories Company, the sole cement producer.

But in a setback, the cabinet halted a decision to go

ahead with the telecoms sale to a foreign strategic investor after only one bidder was left competing.

Thomson pointed out Jordan's vulnerability to major external constraints, citing Middle East peace uncertainty, renewed tension in Iraq and a decline in oil prices which reduce critical worker remittances.

"Jordan faces political and economic risks emanating from the military and political developments on the Arab-Israeli front as well as Iraq. Tensions have scared away tourists, closed off important export markets in Iraq and the West Bank and dampened enthusiasm for investment," Shehadi said.

But the bank rating agency said Jordan was positioned to attract through U.S. and European Union free trade accords, foreign direct investment in manufacturing which taps the Kingdom's pool of skilled labour.

Thomson Bank Watch said it would continue to monitor Jordan's 1999 budget and an expected new IMF-directed economic reform programme to see if they signal a return to fiscal discipline or a move towards an expansionary fiscal policy.

Jordan has hinted it needs to inject more liquidity into the economy even at the expense of a higher budget deficit, officially set at around seven per cent of gross domestic product to activate the sluggish economy.

Thomson Watch said this would "exacerbate the country's external position and unleash inflationary pressures."

Jordan still embroiled in bureaucracy, red tape — study

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — Efforts by the government over the past six years to encourage investment in Jordan have failed to cut the red tape sufficiently in registration procedure, according to a recent study.

The study, conducted by the Foreign Investment Advisory Service, a joint service of the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development said that despite attempts to reduce trade barriers, lower tax rates, liberalise foreign exchange and open up to private investors, the decades-old administrative system has hindered investors from benefiting fully from the changes introduced.

The study questioned the "cumbersome" approvals investors are required to obtain prior to establishing a business.

Investors have to provide several authorities with the same information which results in wasting the investors' time, duplication of efforts, and a waste of governmental resources, the study said.

"Sectoral licences by ministries, the company comp-

troller's role in commercial registry and the professional licence by the concerned municipality do not serve a clear governmental purpose," the study stressed.

Local and foreign companies that wish to operate in the country must register under Jordanian law.

The study showed that registration needs the approval of the comptroller of companies, and final registration with the registrar, both at the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

In order to improve the registration process, the study recommended that there be one office, the registrar, in which a simple process and form is needed to collect necessary information.

It also suggested that a duly appointed agent, an attorney for example, can act as a sole incorporator, presenting himself at the comptroller's office and signing the registration documents instead of requiring all prospective partners to do so.

However, the establishment of the Investment Promotion Corporation in 1995 by the government was aimed at simplifying the investment procedures.

The corporation grants incentives to companies

such as tax reductions, exemptions of customs duties and sales tax on imports.

In practice, the study showed that obtaining the corporation's approval for duty exemptions is "burdensome," especially that the corporation exists in Amman and does not have any branches.

Companies, which receive their goods at the port of Aqaba, prefer to pay customs duties on goods (when duties are small), in order to avoid travelling to the Investment Promotion Corporation premises where their original shipping documents have to be stamped.

To ease the process, the study urged the government to decentralise the operation

and to relieve the corporation from directly monitoring import duty exemptions and assign the responsibility to the Customs Department.

"Decentralisation will allow the corporation to get closer look to clients and to function more effectively in facilitating investors' needs," the study indicated.

The study also pointed out other administrative barriers investors face such as obtaining a work permit, final licensing by different ministries, especially that some manufacturing activities require more than one ministry's approval.

"It may take a week to a month for a building permit; a month to a year for environmental clearance; and

several months to several years to lease land from the state," the study indicated.

The study, which aims to help the government in establishing the agenda and timetable for simplifying Jordan's investment systems, also searches for ways to remove the barriers.

"Some functions currently carried out by different agencies could be combined. Others that are simply duplicating each other should be eliminated. An overall effort would not only benefit investors, but also would save the time and resources for the government as a whole," the study stressed.

REUTERS • REUTERS •

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.6547	0.8988	1.3519	118.48	1.6473	1636.10	1.8844	5.5440
DE Mark	0.6043	-	0.3603	0.6160	70.38	0.9347	988.45	1.2774	3.3918
GB Sterling	1.6755	2.7738	-	2.2628	195.25	2.0925	2741.74	3.1262	9.2962
CH Franc	0.7397	1.2247	0.4413	-	86.21	1.1441	1210.74	138.05	4.1061
JP Yen	0.0086	1.4190	0.5119	1.1890	-	1.3268	14.04	160.05	4.7681
CA Dollar	0.6463	1.0495	0.3799	0.8519	1.33	-	1037.76	1.1829	3.5160
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0102	0.3642	0.8825	1406.47	0.9445	-	11.40	3.3879
NL Guilder	0.5364	88.56	0.3195	72.41	62.40	0.8286	676.44	-	2.9720
FR Franc	0.1804	0.2982	0.1074	24.3700	20.98	0.2787	33.63	33.6300	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7605	0.3770	3.6402	0.3014	3.6727	1501.00	3.4280
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2898	0.5317	5.1343	0.4250	5.1801	2117.07	4.8307
Saudi Riyal	0.2665	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0803	0.98	400.21	0.9132
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9488	-	9.66	7.9994	9.74	3981.64	8.0854
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0303	1.0303	-	0.0828	1.01	412.34	0.9409
Kuwait Dinar	3.3184	2.3627	12.4457	1.2510	12.08	-	12.19	4980.82	9.0409
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0206	0.9912	0.0621	-	408.69	0.9326
Lebanese 1000	0.67	0.4724	2.4987	0.2512	2.4252	0.2008	2.4468	-	2.2818
Egyptian	0.2920	0.2070	1.0950	0.1101	1.0628	0.0880	1.0723	438.25	-

Energy					Mid-East Currencies				
Oil	Last	Review			Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY
Brent	0.00	0.00			SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4414	0.15918	0.30062
W. Texas	14.00	14.27			AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46078	0.16252	0.36826
Bonny	0.00	0.00			KW Dinar	3.3184	4.9451	1.98098	4.48833
Debut	12.73	12.87			BH Dinar	0.2720	0.4414	0.15918	0.30062
UL Gas	136.00	136.00			CY Pound	2.0378	3.3686	1.2341	2.7688

JOD Cross Rates			Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)				
Currency	Buy	Sell	Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-1-
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	Month	Month	Month	Month	Year
GB Sterling	1.1857	1.1916	Ctry	Month	Month	Month	Year
DE Mark	0.4282	0.4303	USD	5.2388	5.2196	4.9788	4.7513
CH Franc	0.6284	0.629	GBP	7.3706	7.1750	6.9080	6.6609
FR Franc	0.1277	0.1283	JPY	0.3522	0.4034	0.4366	0.4652
JP Yen	0.0063	0.0063	DEM	3.6000	3.5967	3.5863	3.5000
NL Guilder	0.3791	0.381	FRF	3.5099	1.2593	1.3084	1.4166
IT Lira	0.4325	0.4347	CHF	1.0000	3.5703	3.5410	3.5039

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	8591.84	96.81	1.14	8595.44	8498.12
New York	S&P 500	1097.61	11.58	1.08	1097.61	1085.93
London	FT-SE 100	6410.5	62	0.97	6465.2	6398.1
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	13564.61	-104.21	-0.78	13635.6	13454.8
Paris	CAC 40	3531.82	30.39	1.45	3551.31	3512.66
Frankfurt	DAX	4671.12	121.79	2.68	4722.09	4609.99

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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- 1 "Ticklish" muppet
- 5 Pile up
- 10 Roman commoner
- 14 Flourish vigorously
- 15 Hebrew prophet
- 16 One with regrets
- 17 Be an omen of
- 18 "The Birth of Venus" artist
- 20 One who grins City on
- 22 Onondaga Lake
- 23 Italian port
- 25 Actress Russo
- 26 Sect members
- 29 "Calendar Girl" singer
- 33 French friend
- 34 Loan and loss
- 36 Played again
- 37 Perjurer
- 39 Buenos
- 41 Skedaddle!
- 42 Impressionist painter
- 44 Foretell
- 46 TV movie channel
- 47 Moe and Street, e.g.
- 48 Slav resident
- 51 ... della Robbia
- 53 Bar, legally
- 54 Develop a stomach problem
- 58 Most vigorous
- 61 Swiss surrealist
- 63 Draft status
- 64 Gone forever
- 65 "Cry, the beloved Country" writer
- 66 Scapes by
- 67 Writing fluids
- 68 Reflection
- 69 Puts on

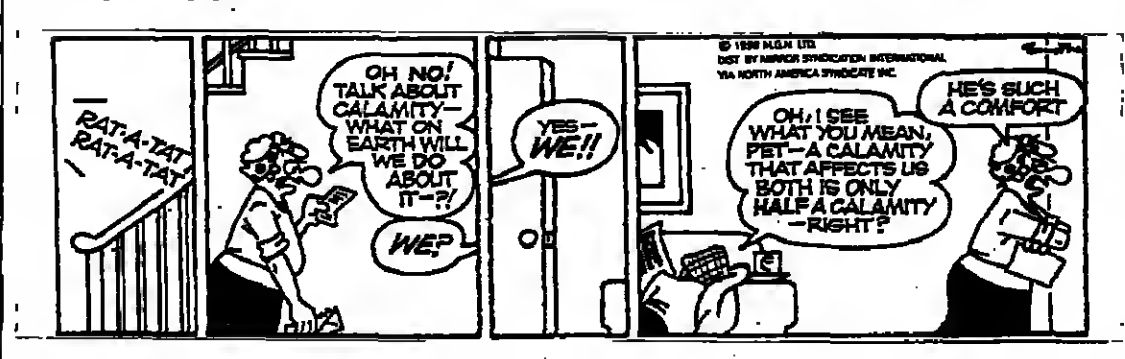
DOWN

- 1 Recedes
- 2 Weaver's frame
- 3 "Reclining Nude" painter
- 4 Brunch choice
- 5 Food of the gods
- 6 "O sole ..."
- 7 Divisions of
- 8 Goat-man
- 9 Former English counties
- 10 Goes before
- 11 Corker
- 12 Marine shockers
- 13 Soft, French cheese
- 19 Chair maker
- 21 Oklahoma city
- 24 Courtyards
- 26 Cornflakes
- 27 Inuit craft
- 28 Proud step
- 30 Russian-born sculptor
- 31 Shrine at Mecca
- 32 Russian writer
- 35 Transition
- 38 Returns the incumbent
- 40 Daylight
- 43 Cornwall town
- 45 Moreno of "West Side Story"
- 48 Garlic shrimp
- 50 Old it alone
- 52 Mr. T's group
- 54 Jamaican citrus fruit
- 55 Literary notable
- 56 Wooden barrel
- 57 Singer James
- 59 Visualized
- 60 Pravda source
- 62 Oress

Peanuts



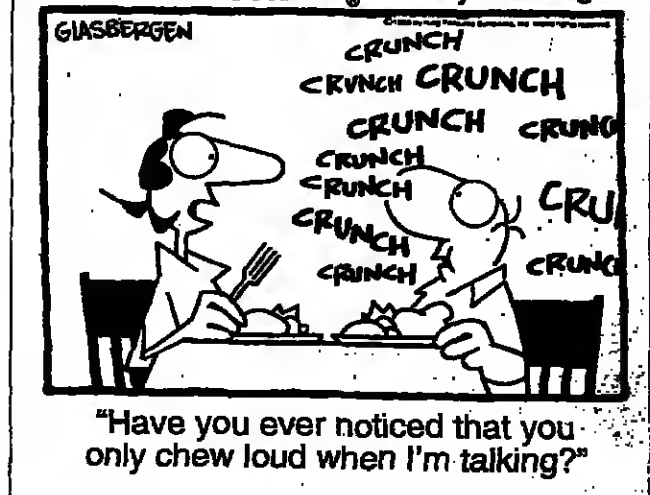
Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

DAGUR

SEDUE

METHEL

THACAT

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Yesterday's Jumbles: GAUZE BEFOG FORBID HAZARD
Answer: He got this when he became foreman of the demolition crew — A BIG RAZE

Business & Finance

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Hourani stresses export as lifeline to salvage the deepening recession

EXPORT IS the best and most effective way to salvage the economy from the retreating conditions, said Industry and Trade Minister Mohammad Saleh Hourani when he opened the plant of a company for manufacturing suitcases.

The government is currently working hard to open outside markets for Jordanian industries to break the cycle of retreat presently witnessed by the markets," he emphasised.

Hourani stressed that the government is strongly seeking to encourage investment and provide all the services that would contribute to developing and increasing local production and encouraging local industries.

He indicated that the government, in cooperation with the private sector, can remedy the problems of poverty and unemployment stressing that the private sector has a fundamental role in creating job opportunities and arriving at positive results to develop the national economy.

Speaking during the opening ceremony of the plant, which is situated at Al Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid, the director general of the Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC) said 16 companies have reserved sites at the Irbid estate.

Jordan approves selling a third of cement company to French Lafarge

THE CABINET has approved a deal to sell 33 per cent of the Jordan Cement Factories Co. (JCFC) to French cement giant Lafarge, an official said Thursday.

Lafarge presented the best tender offer and will buy 20 million of the government's shares for \$100 million, the official said.

Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh said that being able to "attract \$100 million, especially at times like these in the international market," would "boost the credibility" of the Jordanian economy.

The government controls and currently owns 49.3 per cent of the country's sole cement producer, Jordan's third-largest company, and will also sell a small percentage of its share to local investors.

The rest of JCFC, established in 1951, is owned by 60,000 private shareholders.

The project will be the first Middle Eastern cement project for Lafarge, which will be the only company prepared to buy the stake as an institutional investor without

JIEC chief Amer Majali added the areas which were reserved for local, Arab and foreign investors represent 97 per cent of the 344 dunams of land that constitute an expansion to the Irbid industrial estate.

According to Majali, the 16 companies will bring a total of JD73.1 million of investments and will create 10,235 new job opportunities. At present, he said, there is a total of 57 plants operating in Al Hassan Industrial Estate.

"Of these plants, which carry an overall investment of about JD100 million and which have provided 3,000 job opportunities, 19 industries represent local-Arab, local-foreign, local-Arab-foreign and Arab-Arab joint ventures with an investment of around JD48 million that have provided 1,800 job opportunities.

The plant that will manufacture suitcases is a member of the international Buscan Group which is based in Hong Kong.

The capital of the industry is JD5 million spread between Jordanian and U.S. investors. The plant has created 200 job opportunities which will become 2,000 upon carrying out expansion plans (Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i).

insisting on management control.

The Egyptian investment bank EFG-Hermes, chosen as financial advisor to the sale, had approached several international firms but Lafarge was the only one to show serious interest.

The government originally invited expressions of interest in the sale in 1996 at the insistence of the World Bank, which has been pressing Jordan to privatise as part of economic reforms.

Little progress had been made until Tarawneh's government was appointed in August and began forging ahead with the privatisation programme despite domestic opposition and cries of asset-stripping.

JCFC, which is capitalised at \$5 million, owns two factories that produce 4.2 million tonnes of cement a year.

The company exports about a million tonnes a year to Malaysia, Mauritius, the Palestinian territories, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen (Reuters).

AFM broker sees drop in prices reflecting despair among investors

(Continued from page 8)

absence of foreign demand for shares and the lack of institutional buying which is still shy to show up in the market," Nageeb told the Jordan Times.

The banking sector won the lion's share of the turnover recording JD8.6 million, or 76.3 per cent, followed by the industrial

sector with JD1.6 million, 14.7 per cent, the insurance sector 670,000, 5.9 per cent, and finally services sector with JD350,000 or 3.1 per cent.

The Jordan National Bank share in the turnover amounted to 66 per cent followed by the Arab Bank with 5.3 per cent and Housing Bank 1.3 per cent.

Nageeb said the govern-

ment decision to sell 33.3 of its equity in the Jordan Cement Factories to foreign investors has "reflected positively on the prices of some shares, especially the phosphate company."


"Among the shares that drew the attention last week was that of the phosphate company which attracted local demand. For many, the company's share price

was attractive," he added. The company's share recorded a 90 fills increase in its price.

The parallel market won 4.5 per cent of the total turnover, where out of the 27 firms that changed hands in the market, 11 recorded increase in their prices, six registered decrease and 10 remained unchanged.

Trading in this sector focused on the Nutridar, Arab Financial Investment and Namico.

Out of the 88 firms that changed hands in the bourse, 36 firms recorded increase in their prices, 33 registered decrease and 19 witnessed no change in their prices, the bulletin indicated.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET															
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN															
TELEPHONE: 4611211, 4611212															
ORGANISED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (24/10/1998 - 30/10/1998)															
WEEKLY REPORT															
															
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS		COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE PRICE	TURNOVER MARKET SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
HIGH		LOW													
215,000	200,000	ARAB BANK	16.4	0.99	71	2910	422980	204.00	205.00	200.00	203.00	-1.00	202.721	0.24	5
1,550	1,500	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	12.4	4.52	39	484651	521165	1.52	1.55	1.51	1.55	+0.01	1.550	11.523	5
1,100	1,020	BANK OF JORDAN		0.00	27	12574	11294	1.01	1.08	1.04	1.04	-0.03	1.057	0.040	4
900	950	MID. EAST INV. BK.	63.1	0.00	26	14555	13194	90.00	99.00	91.00	91.00	-0.06	95.7	0.140	4
1,580	1,500	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	7.05	17	3855	9718	1.50	1.49	1.47	1.47	-0.01	1.477	0.16	1
2,950	2,470	THE HOUSING BK.	11.2	3.49	128	51470	144603	2.47	2.71	2.41	2.71	-0.04	2.648	0.56	5
1,770	1,700	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	1.1	0.00	14	54674	100958	1.70	1.85	1.70	1.85	-0.15	1.847	0.273	1
9,000	9,520	JOR. GULF BANK		0.00	60	101257	107442	4.00	4.40	3.98	4.40	-0.42	4.086	0.916	5
1,710	1,900	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	41.9	2.31	1	420	848	7.00	2.16	2.08	2.16	-0.08	2.120	0.02	2
1,640	1,540	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	14.2	0.00	51	24118	38844	1.55	1.60	1.55	1.59	-0.04	1.575	0.112	5
730	1,400	JOR. INV. PJR. BANK	21.5	3.51	13	1888	19594	1.42	1.42	1.40	1.40	-0.02	1.410	0.049	3
660	700	BETH. AL. WAL. (BETHNA)	1.3	0.00	1	1850	1250	70.00	70.00	61.00	67.00	-0.03	67.6	0.02	1
	620	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	911.5	0.00	64	115242	70943	4.00	4.30	3.90	4.30	-0.40	4.015	1.152	5
BANKS SECTOR															
3,100	3,100	JORDAN INSURANCE	12.3	5.08	7	195525	186525	3.10	3.00	2.95	2.95	-0.15	2.999	2.911	4
1,940	1,920	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	9.1	0.00	1	150	285	1.92	1.90	1.90	1.90	-0.02	1.900	0.004	1
1,450	1,400	NATL. ABILA INSUR.	78.5	0.00	1	25700	40320	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	-0.00	1.400	1.240	1
INSURANCE SECTOR															
1,440	1,410	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.2	5.81	61	10914	12407	1.42	1.44	1.42	1.42	-0.02	1.427	0.255	5
1,940	1,470	IRIID ELECTRICITY	9.9	4.25	31	8222	14740	1.82	2.26	1.40	1.60	-0.22	1.697	0.290	1
7,100	7,050	UNCL. OWNERS PEG.	7.8	4.12	1	2790	2790	2.10	2.00	1.90	1.90	-0.20	1.900	1.00	1
730	630	NATL. PORTFOLIO	28.7	0.00	86	14950	42045	4.66	7.11	6.17	7.22	-0.06	7.01	1.139	5
6,470	5,300	ARAB 1	8.0	7.44	2	302	1466	5.30	5.22	5.22	5.22	-0.08	5.220	0.010	1
1,900	1,810	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.4	2.12	14	16450	10460	1.80	1.89	1.88	1.89	-0.01	1.885	0.080	5
990	880	BAKSA EDUCATION	19.8	0.00	1	2550	1935	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	-0.02	8.800	0.028	1
1,130	1,070	UNIFIED CO.	4.8	10.19	10	9100	10744	1.10	1.11	1.08	1.08	-0.02	1.092	0.014	5
500	410	UNION LARD DEV.	0.0	0.00	1	920	235	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.7	-0.01	4.700	0.010	1
1,170	1,000	UNITED FOR FINANCIAL	1.2	6.10	10	65400	65985	1.00	1.00	0.96	0.96	-0.04	1.000	3.280	2
SERVICES SECTOR															
1,400	1,050	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	12.3	0.00	211	424684	507681	1.07	1.24	1.12	1.16	-0.09	1.163	0.992	5
3,820	3,510	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.0	5.80	4	11450	40221	2.53	2.52	2.45	2.45	-0.08	2.513	0.014	1
10,450	10,210	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.9	8.74	52	4463	50365	10.21	10.22	10.07	10.15	-0.12	10.148	0.78	5
5,000	4,850	JORDAN TANNING	8.3	7.71	8	697	3495	4.90	5.15	4.90	5.15	-0.25	5.014	0.010	2
1,000	950	WOODEN INDUSTRIES	10.5	7.57	2	1550	3178	95.00	95.00	95.00	95.00	-0.00	95.000	0.254	1
1,150	1,120	INDUSTRIAL COM. ADM.	69.7	0.00	1	1950	1567	1.15	1.10	1.12	1.18	-0.03	1.170	0.061	2
5,450	5,550	JOR. WASTE MILLS	7.4	3.54	2	61100	25345	5.40	5.70	5.45	5.45	-0.25	5.608	1.012	2
7,420	2,400	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	7.3	2.91	91	20784	52891	2.51	2.50	2.52	2.54	-0.05	2.565	1.115	5
1,080	1,000	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	6.4	10.00	4	4000	4900	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-0.00	1.000	0.080	2
2,710	2,450	JORDAN DAIRY	6.1	10.10	2	750	2053	2.45	2.75	2.45	2.75	-0.30	2.737	0.043	1
1,100	1,000	JOR. PAPER MANFCT.	8.9	9.35	8	1400	1482	1.05	1.07	1.05	1.07	-0.02	1.051	0.049	4
6,450	4,450	ARAB CHEM. DIVTCH.	1.4	7.52	1	130	4989	6.45	6.45	6.45	6.45	-0.00	6.450	0.015	5
5,300	4,950	DAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	4.1	6.93	19	1794	29022	4.95	5.20	5.00	5.05	-0.10	5.086	0.095	5
1,000	1,760	ARAB ALUM. IND.	12.8	14.45	6	850	1416	1.74	1.74	1.71	1.72	-0.01	1.736	0.014	1
370	350	LIVESOCK & PAULSEN	13.5	0.00	36	22550	8344	3.34	3.31	3.27	3.31	-0.01	3.310	0.603	5
580	420	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	0.0	0.00	18	10700	14900	4.9	5.0	4.5	4.8	-0.03	4.95	0.760	5
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR															
					967	1043940	1171412	INDEX NUMBER		71.50	CHANGE 1.0207				

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You might feel shy expressing yourself to your true love. It's as if somebody's watching your every move. Make sure that's not actually the case before you get too mushy. You may tend to hold back, because you're afraid your sweetheart won't agree. Discretion would be prudent, just in case.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) It'll be easier to get what you want later this week, so don't worry about it today. You'll most likely excel right now in real estate or home furnishings, and only if you're buying, not selling. It's a good evening to have friends over. You'll have a fabulous time. Have them bring their own snacks to cut down on expenses.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Everybody's in the mood for fun, except perhaps the person who signs your paycheck. An authority figure is a little hesitant to relax. Everything seems to be going well, but are you sure? Report what you've completed recently and have your partner do the same. Then watch the boss relax. He or she may even send you home early.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) The money coming in doesn't seem to be enough, but that could just be your perception. You worry about money anyway.

That's how you manage to have more than you actually need. Just remember, it's OK for you to have abundance in your life. It's natural and healthy — and quite likely the case. Enjoy it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You're lucky right now. You're willing to act, and your sense of humour is in good shape. That, plus your tendency to consider options carefully and make wise choices, gives you the advantage. Don't get cocky, however. It's also important to be compassionate, kind, loving and understanding. Don't just tell others what to do; listen, too.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Through a friend in a big company, you could hear of a way to get the money you need for something for your home. You'll qualify through your hard work as well as your connections. It's not as if you're cheating. Don't be frustrated if you can't see the results right away. This could take until at least tomorrow to come together.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If you've got

a problem, ask a friend for information. You wanted to find the answer all by yourself, but that's the long way around. If you're running out of time, let people know what you're trying to accomplish so they can lend you their expertise. Even a person you didn't think you liked may point you in the right direction.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) If you think you're worthy more money, this would be a good time to ask for it. An authority figure is in a generous mood this morning, but may find another way to spend the money by afternoon. Meanwhile, don't get too extravagant trying to impress an attractive person. He or she thinks you're pretty neat already.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You'll be especially creative first thing this morning. However, you could experience a breakdown later in the day. The idea is good; you just don't know how to carry it through yet. Don't get frustrated. Do a little more homework. Once you find the mistake, you'll

be back on course. CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) It's easier for you to borrow money, especially if you're thinking of putting a down payment on real estate. Action taken now could firm up a deal that will lead to future security. Accept the advice of a reclusive person later this evening. If he or she says not to do something, heed the warning.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There could be an argument between you and a strong partner. If you see one brewing, keep your opinions mostly to yourself. Minimise the problem while maintaining a cheerful attitude. You can afford to be gracious. You'll probably get what you want in the long run. Give up something minor to make sure that happens.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There's lots of work to be done. The good news is that it could be both fun and profitable. The person who assigned you these duties has got quite a treasure at his or her disposal. Your pockets will be full by the time the day is over. Be gracious and accept what you get.

Birthstone of October: Opal — Tourmaline.

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Schumachers make it family affair for F1

SUZUKA (AFP) — Michael and Ralf Schumacher turned the Formula One circus into a family affair Friday by posting the two best times in free practice ahead of a tense title showdown at the season-ending Japanese Grand Prix.

McLaren's Mika Hakkinen, revving up for his first driver's title with a solid four-point lead over Michael Schumacher, clocked the fifth fastest time after sweeping all aside in the morning half of the two-

leg session.

But the 30-year-old Finn, who could sew up the championship by finishing at least second if the Ferrari ace wins the race, said he was satisfied with the day's work focusing a race set-up programme.

"We carried out a routine practice session, concentrating on the balance for the race," he said. "The car ran reliably. It was strong and we completed a good number of laps, so I'm very pleased."

Michael Schumacher, 29,

lapped the twisty 5.86-kilometre (3.64-mile) track in 1min 39.823sec with 15 minutes to go in the hour-long afternoon leg.

His red Ferrari cruised at an average speed of 211.478 kph (131.410 mph) in fine weather.

Ralf, 23, driving a Jordan Mugen-Honda, clocked 1:40.336 with four minutes to go. Another German, Heinz-Harald Frentzen, posted the third fastest time of 1:40.389 in a Williams.

The second Ferrari driver, Irishman Eddie Irvine, was

fourth at 1:40.615.

Michael Schumacher, a two-time world champion, expected the qualifying session on Saturday to be "very close."

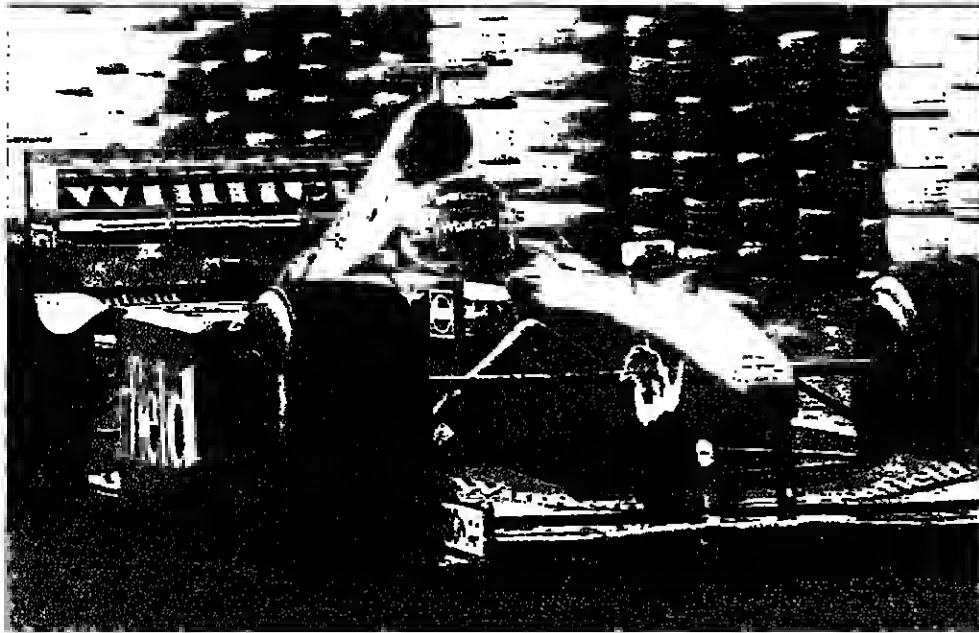
"I believe we are competitive," said Schumacher, who was beaten into second spot by Hakkinen at the last Grand Prix in Luxembourg five weeks ago. "All the hard work in testing over the past few weeks seems to have paid off."

Hakkinen, who won his first Grand Prix at last year's final race, stands with seven victories this season, relying on a superbly aerodynamic Mercedes-powered McLaren designed by Adrian Newey, who quit Williams last year. Schumacher has six.

Ralf Schumacher, whose best Grand Prix result was second place at a rain-drenched Belgian round won by teammate Damon Hill in August, had no illusions.

"Second place looks really good but I think it is unrealistic to think we can hold onto this tomorrow," he said.

It was rare that the Schumachers placed one-two even in free practice and they were seen chatting together for a long while in the Ferrari catering area in the paddocks after the session.



Canadian Formula One driver Jacques Villeneuve powers his Williams during a free practice run at Suzuka Circuit October 30 for Sunday's Formula One Japanese Grand Prix. Villeneuve clocked 1:41.252 (Reuters photo)



British Formula One driver David Coulthard's girlfriend Heidi (L) and Finnish driver Mika Hakkinen's wife Erja cover their ears as they watch the practice session for Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix in Suzuka (AFP photo)

McLaren's Formula One champions

LONDON (R) — Mika Hakkinen could become the sixth driver to win the Formula One world championship for McLaren on Sunday.

The following is a look at the past champions:

• 1991, 1990 and 1988 — Ayrton Senna (Brazil)

The late Brazilian's third title win made history for McLaren as the only Formula One team to have won four consecutive drivers and constructors' titles. The greatest driver of his generation, Senna won 35 races for McLaren in a career studded with brilliance and controversy.

He won his first title with a brilliant drive in the rain at Suzuka in 1988 to triumph by three points despite winning fewer races than team mate and runner-up Alain Prost.

But he lost out the following year to Prost after a collision on the first corner in Japan. The Frenchman withdrew, Senna continued and won only to be disqualified.

In 1990, Senna got his revenge at Suzuka and rammed the stunned Prost's Ferrari off at the first corner.

Senna died at Imola in the San Marino Grand Prix on May 1 1994 after his Williams hit a concrete wall.

• 1989, 1986 and 1985 — Alain Prost (France)

Nicknamed "The Professor" because of his calculated and thoughtful manner, Prost was the most successful driver in Grand Prix racing with a record 51 GPs and four titles in all.

His 1986 win came after Briton Nigel Mansell suffered a dramatic puncture in the final race in Australia. Prost won with 72 points to the unlucky Mansell's 70.

The 1989 triumph ran into added controversy after Senna was disqualified in Japan by the French head of the world body FIA for accepting illegal assistance after he and Prost collided.

Prost, who did not finish, won the title by four points. The Frenchman now runs his own team.

• 1984 — Niki Lauda (Austria)

The Austrian had retired two years previously but he returned for his third and final title, beating team mate Prost by just half a point in the closest winning margin ever. The Frenchman had won the penultimate race at the Nuerburgring and the title went to the wire in Portugal.

Prost started the race on the front row, Lauda in ninth place. The Austrian spun trying to overtake but, helped by several cars retiring, worked his way doggedly up to finish second behind Prost and snatch the title.

• 1976 — James Hunt (Britain)

Lauda, making an astonishing return after his near-fatal crash, led the championship by three points with only the Japanese race remaining. Faced with heavy rain and atrocious visibility, Lauda withdrew after two laps saying it was "total bloody stupidity out there". Hunt led but needed a late tyre change. Mario Andretti took over the lead and the Briton finished third to take the title by one point.

• 1974 — Emerson Fittipaldi (Brazil)

The first Brazilian to win the Formula One world title, triumphing with Lotus in 1972, Fittipaldi was then runner-up to Jackie Stewart in 1973 before moving to McLaren where he regained the title with three wins.

Aikman returns as Cowboys seek to shoot down Eagles

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) — Troy Aikman makes his long-awaited return to the line-up as the Dallas Cowboys renew their bitter rivalry with the Philadelphia Eagles in the National Football League this week.

Aikman has been sidelined since September 13, when he suffered a fractured left collarbone in a 42-23 loss to the Denver Broncos.

Aikman sat out the last five games after starting 60 consecutive contests for the Cowboys.

The three-time Super Bowl champion led Dallas to a season-opening victory over Arizona before completing 5-of-12 passes for 88 yards and a touchdown in the loss to Denver.

In his absence, Jason Garrett has led Dallas to a mediocre 3-2 mark, including a disappointing 13-12 loss to the lowly Chicago Bears in Week Seven before the Cowboys' bye week.

The bye gave Aikman an extra week to rest the shoulder. He makes his return against a club that has been awful. Even so, Philadelphia has managed to maintain the top passing defense in the NFC and should be near its best Monday — at home and in the national spotlight against its most hated rival.

Guard George Hegamin, who signed with the Eagles as a free agent in February after four years as a backup in Dallas, said the Cowboys' October 18 defeat in Chicago will have them raring to prove themselves.

"I know right now that Chan Gailey is telling the guys, 'These are the things we have to do. We have to go in here and take this game. We have to show everybody we're the offensive line we've always been,'" Hegamin said.

He said the Eagles' lowly 1-6 record won't change a thing.

"If anybody thinks they're taking this week easy, they can forget it," Hegamin said.

The Eagles earned their only win of the season in their last game at Veterans Stadium, posting a 17-12 victory over the winless Washington Redskins on October 11th. But Philadelphia fell back into the loss column last time out, committing a pair of key turnovers in the fourth quarter in a 13-10 loss to the San Diego Chargers.

Rodney Peete makes his third straight start at quarterback for Philadelphia after going 22-of-39 for 232 yards in the loss to San Diego. But he has thrown just two TD passes and four interceptions in four games for the Eagles, who have yet to have a 100-yard rusher this season.

Emmitt Smith should be doing the damage on the ground in this contest, having been held to 78 yards in the loss to Chicago after going well over 100 in the previous two contests. Dallas is 3-0 this season when he goes over 100 yards rushing and 1-3 when he fails to reach the century mark.

Both of the NFL's two undefeated teams are in action Sunday.

Super Bowl champion Denver (7-0) take on Bengals (2-5) in Cincinnati, and the Minnesota Vikings (7-0) look to keep their perfect season intact when they visit the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (3-4).

Other games are: St. Louis at Atlanta, Miami at Buffalo, New Orleans at Carolina, Arizona at Detroit, New England at Indianapolis, Tennessee at Pittsburgh, Jacksonville at Baltimore, New York Giants at Washington, New York Jets at Kansas City, San Francisco at Green Bay and Oakland at Seattle.

Six-way fight for supremacy in women's tennis

MOSCOW (R) — Mary Pierce's Kremlin Cup victory served sharp notice that competition for the No. 1 spot in women's tennis has never been fiercer.

Over the past 20 years or so, the battle for supremacy has been a relatively straightforward two-player affair.

From 1975 to 1986, the top ranking in the women's game was memorably fought between close rivals Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova.

Between 1987 and 1990, Steffi Graf largely held off Navratilova's challenge for the crown. For much of the period from 1991 to 1996, Graf and Monica Seles were the leading protagonists.

Now, for the first time in the modern era, the battle for No. 1 is wide open.

Pierce's triumph in Moscow was her third tournament success of the year. By beating Seles in straight sets in the final and in returning to the top 10 after a brief absence, she now believes she can be the premier player in the world.

"I feel I have the game to be at the top but I've just been missing the consistency. But that's something I'm working on and I think I'm improving. Hopefully, reaching the number one spot in women's tennis is something that will definitely happen for me," Pierce said.

But eighth-ranked Pierce, whose highest placing was three for most of 1995, is just another name among at least six genuine contenders for the mantle of best player.

American Lindsay Davenport is the current No. 1, with her predecessor Martina Hingis of Switzerland close behind.



Steffi Graf

Reigning Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna, with four titles this year, lurks at three and she also believes the top spot is there for the taking.

Also muscling into contention are Seles and Venus Williams, who both said during the Kremlin Cup that they backed their own credentials for No. 1.

Seles, who dominated the women's game in 1991 and 1992 before her on-court stabbing by a spectator in Hamburg in April 1993, knows what she must do to return to the pinnacle.

There were times during the Kremlin Cup when she played the best tennis of the week and her 6-0 first set rout of Italy's Silvia Farina in the semifinals was sublime in its execution.

"That was one of those sets when everything you touch seems to work perfectly and

that's how I have to play if I want to return to the No. 1 spot," Seles said.

"I really believe I can return to number one — and I wouldn't be out here playing if I didn't believe that. I played some really good tennis during the week but, in the final, I didn't. Days like that I have to cut out if I want to be No. 1."

Seles, who double-faulted six times against Pierce and saw her usually reliable forehand waver, said she had to perform at the required level a lot more consistently.

"Obviously a lot depends on the game you're allowed to play by your opponent and there's often a fine line between dictating your game and being dictated to. But there's still a bit of a way for me to go in terms of consistency and my service has to improve — it can be both a weapon for me and a prob-

lem," Seles said.

Williams, who was the top seed in Moscow for the first time in her professional career, sounds almost arrogant in her conviction that she will be the World No. 1.

"I feel I'm the best and, one day, I'll be the best and play the best. All the players who get to number one have their games at a certain level. I'm almost there and I must just concentrate on getting to that higher level," she said.

While strussing that she did not plan too far ahead, Williams clearly has the top spot well within her sights.

"At the moment, I'm not thinking past the Australian Open next January. I think you have to set yourself short-term goals which are realistic... and those short-term goals then get you to your long-term goals. But getting to number one is a short-term goal for me."

The tall 18-year-old, who has rocketed to world number five in her first full year on tour, said she just needed to work on a few technical aspects.

"My serve has definitely improved since I've been on the road this year — it's got a lot more consistency. I just need to work on things like moving to the ball better and taking the ball early. Then I think I'll be there."

There is a possibility that Williams, with her awesome serving power, will be able to dominate the women's game for some time.

But, for the moment, the tennis public can enjoy a battle royal as the likes of Davenport, Hingis, Novotna, Pierce, Seles and Williams fight for supremacy.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
AND TAMAR HIRSCH
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PLAY IT SAFE

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ Q7632
♥ 8
♦ K932
♣ J95

WEST
♠ K994
♥ A
♦ J109
♣ 107832

EAST
♠ J105
♥ J1093
♦ Q974
♣ A8

SOUTH
♠ AQ87542
♥ A5
♦ KQ4

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 1♠ Pass 1♥ Pass 1♠ Pass
2♥ Pass 2♠ Pass 2♥ Pass 2♠ Pass
3♥ Pass 3♠ Pass 3♥ Pass 3♠ Pass
4♥ Pass 4♠ Pass 4♥ Pass 4♠ Pass
5♥ Pass 5♠ Pass 5♥ Pass 5♠ Pass
6♥ Pass 6♠ Pass 6♥ Pass 6♠ Pass
7♥ Pass 7♠ Pass 7♥ Pass 7♠ Pass

Opening lead: Jack of ♣

To work out the best line of play, it is not necessary that you know the precise percentages of specific distributions. The knowledge that the missing cards in a suit will break as close to evenly as possible, unless the opponents hold an even number of cards in the suit, can be enough.

South found a practical way to describe the unbalanced hand. Since a jump to three hearts would have been invitational, South real-

ized that North would pass many hands, such as the one actually held, where game was a heavy favorite.

West led the jack of diamonds, won by dummy's king. Dummy's lone trump was led, and East made a clever deceptive play by following with the nine. Declarer covered with the queen, losing to the ace. Because of the unfortunate trump break, declarer still had to lose two trump tricks and the ace of clubs — down one.

The contract was on ice as long as declarer could have limited the trump losers to two. Since the most probable split of five missing cards, following the guideline above, is 3-2, that the guideline arises if the suit breaks 4-1.

There is just one combination of 4-1 splits that declarer can handle — one of the defenders must hold a singleton ace. Therefore, declarer should have followed with a low trump on the first round of hearts. When that fetches the ace, all is well.

But what if West were to win with a lower trump? All is still well if trumps are 3-2. When declarer regains the lead, a heart honor will force out the ace, and the remaining honor will draw the last trump. In either case declarer loses only two trump tricks and the ace of clubs.

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA 1'	PHILADELPHIA 2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Hisham Yanes Theatre
	Daniel Day-Lewis & Emily Watson... in THE BOXER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Liam Neeson & Jessica Lange... in ROB ROY Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Comedian Mohammad Huneidi... in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD "1" ADDICTED TO LOVE Shows: 12:30, 3:30 THE GAME Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD "2" UP CLOSE & PERSONAL Shows: 3:30, 5:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Comedian Mohammad Huneidi... in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Comedian Mohammad Huneidi... in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30	Watch out for the new play

Listings for films and times as recieved by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Boys seek Noah's family behind decision to quit Davis Cup captaincy

LA AFP — Troy Aikman makes his return to the line-up as the Dallas Cowboys quarterback this week.

LA AFP — The 1983 French Open tennis champion Yannick Noah said Friday his decision to step down as France's Davis Cup captain was to allow him to spend more time with his family.

"My schedule was very tight the last few years. It was very difficult. Now I have my oldest children getting an age that I should be there. I felt I needed to spend more time with my children and my family," said Noah.

Noah, who has moved to the United States, was talking after he lost a first round match 3-6, 4-6 to American Mel Purcell at the \$150,000 Champions tennis tournament here.

He said his decision to quit has nothing to do with playing music with his band or playing tennis on the world senior circuit which he joined in 1996, winning three titles so far.

"It is not that I have to decide which is better. What's important for me is to be happy where I am at the moment, and I'm happy to be able to play tennis this week," said Noah, 38.

"In three weeks, I'm doing a music tour, I like to do that, and every time I'm doing these things, I feel I'm just a lucky person to be able to do these things that I like," he added.

Noah indicated that he would come back to lead the French team again when he gets older and more younger players join the senior tour to push him out of action.

Noah, who is to play two more tournaments this season, will step down after France's Davis Cup tie against Israel on 25-27 December in Tel Aviv.

Guy Forget, 33, succeeds Noah as Davis Cup and Fed Cup captain.

Forget's first test will be the Davis Cup tie at home to the Netherlands on April 2 to 4. He will then lead the women on April 17 and 18 against Russia in the Fed Cup quarter-finals.



Nantes' midfielder Eric Carriere (R) fights for the ball with Monaco's defender Victor Ikpeba during the Monaco/Nantes match counting for the 11th day of France's Division 1 Soccer Championships. Monaco won 3-1, Marseille beat Lorient 3-1 while Lyon and Le Havre drew 0-0 (AFP photo)

Suspension of Premier League draws angry reaction

Wihdat withhold participation; Qadissieh reject replay

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The Jordan Football Association's (JFA) decision to suspend the match between Al Faisali and Al Qadissieh and to suspend the Premier League Championship has drawn an angry reaction from teams and prompted titleholders Al Wihdat to withhold their participation.

The enraged reaction followed the JFA's decision to resolve the deadlock resulting from Al Faisali's walk-out midway through their Oct. 25 match and the subsequent assault on referees by their fans and administrators after their sole goal was ruled offside with eight minutes remaining.

During the JFA's three-hour meeting, chaired by Vice President Saleh Irsheidat, the association did not announce when the ill-fated game was to be replayed. The JFA suspended two of Al Faisali's officials and imposed a JD300 fine each.

An employee at the Hussein Sports City and a TV cameraman working with Jordan Television were also summoned by police for beating up the referees.

"This is an unjust decision. We will not replay the match and we reserve the right to take appropriate action," said Khalid Zayid, a spokesman of Al Qadissieh.

"[Football] rules are very clear. Any team withdrawing from any match should be considered the loser," Zayid told the Jordan Times. "We will ask the JFA to bring a foreign football expert to rule in the issue and might request a recommendation from Arab or Asian Football Federations," he added.

Al Wihdat Vice President Hilmi Shukir called the ruling "inappropriate."

"The decision demonstrates that anybody can beat up referees and get away without tough punishment. How can we trust the referees when they are scared to take appropriate decisions for fear of players, fans or anyone assaulting them," Shukir said.

"The referees were left unprotected. Their decision was not respected and such a matter cannot be tolerated," he added.

He said that his club was hoping to meet with JFA President HRH Prince Abdullah to brief him about recent developments.

"We have suspended our participation because we feel that what happened was not correct. We cannot rejoin the Premier League Championship under such circumstances," Shukir added.

The rapporteur of the Referees Committee Abdul Latif Abdul Majid noted that a report submitted by a five-referee panel, formed to overlook the case, found that referee Tamimi did not end the match. "Tamimi wrote in his report that

he signalled to end the match but we found no proof to support his statement. Therefore we reached this conclusion," Abdul Majid said.

He was referring to the match report which noted that Tamimi ended the game following the attack on his colleagues and the walk-out of Al Faisali when he cancelled the match's sole goal.

Abdul Majid told the Jordan Times that the panel failed to come up with a unified stance regarding the legitimacy of the goal and recommended to the JFA the ratification of Tamimi's decision to cancel the goal.

"The TV tapes are not enough to rule on this issue. We can not rely on them and after seeing the tapes several times we reached a decision to uphold the referee's decision," Abdul Majid added.

Mohammad Daoud wins National Rally; brother Ahmad captures 1998 overall title

By Roufan Nahhas

AMMAN — Ahmad Daoud captured the 1998 Jordan Drivers Open Championship title with 137.5 points Friday beating last year's champion, elder brother, Mohammad who came fourth with 66 points.

Faris Bustami came second with 97 points and

Ibrahim Mowhawesh came third with 77.5 points ending the 1998 rally season.

In Friday's last round of the LG National Rally, Mohammed Daoud and co-driver Khaled Zakaria drove their Mitsubishi Lancer to victory.

Ibrahim Mowhawesh and co-driver Fahed Al Naber came second in their Ford Escort Cosworth followed

by Faris Bustami and co-driver Lee Den third in their Toyota Celica in the event organised by the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ).

Although overall champion Ahmad Daoud had to abandon Friday's event because of a mechanical failure, that did not affect the standings as the gap between him and the runner-up Bustami was not that close.

Also quitting the rally were Tony Khfaji, Ahmad Mehjar and Amjad Shamaileh.

Out of 13 starters only five cars reached the finish line.

The drivers covered a distance of 200km divided into four stages, 61km each, in which drivers

passed through the desert stages of Daba'a, Salaitah, Mdeisat and back to Daba'a.

The event was held under the patronage of HRH Prince Faisal who presented the winners with trophies at a special ceremony at the RACJ headquarters.

Ivanisevic out of Eurocard Open

STUTTGART (AFP) — Former champion Richard Krajicek managed his first win in six years against Goran Ivanisevic, ousting the Croatian 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5) from the quarter-finals of the \$2.45 million Eurocard Open on Friday.

The 11th-seeded Krajicek, who won the title in Stuttgart in 1992, improved his one-way record against No. 14 Ivanisevic to 3-9.

Krajicek is playing under an injury threat with a knee which could need arthroscopic surgery at any time.

He is hoping to squeeze into a qualifying place for next month's eight-man ATP Tour World Championships from his current tenth position.

Last year, Krajicek lost the title match to Czech Petr Korda.

The Dutchman had not beaten Ivanisevic since 1992 at Indian Wells, California.

World No. 2 Marcelo Rios pulled out moments before his quarter-final, giving tenth seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov a walkover into the semi-finals.

It was the second time in a week that the Chilean had to quit in mid-tournament. In Lyon last Saturday, he stopped during a semi-final against German Tommy Haas.

Rios, challenging Pete Sampras for World No. 1 honours, was reportedly suffering from a hamstring problem.

Sampras was playing later against young American rival Jan-Michael Gambill. Swede Jonas Bjorkman and Briton Greg Rusedski were to complete quarter-final play.

Testud sees off Capriati

QUEBEC (AFP) — Second-seeded Sandrine Testud of France saw off America's former "golden girl" Jennifer Capriati 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) in the second-round of the WTA tournament here Thursday.

Capriati, 22, the 1992 Olympic champion and the world's sixth-ranked player five years ago, fought all the way but was edged out in a tense final set tie-break.

Capriati, who dropped off the tour after the 1993 United States Open, has yet to win a tournament since tagging her comeback two years ago.

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The tender documents are available at JPMC offices in Amman, Supply Department, until (2:00) p.m. local time Thursday 26th November, 1998. Application for documents should be accompanied by a non-refundable fee of JD 350 for each set of tender documents.

The closing date for submitting bids is 12:00 hours local time Thursday 14th January, 1999.

Sameh Madani
Managing Director

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Managing Director

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Palestinian lawmakers strongly condemn crackdown on Hamas

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Palestinian lawmakers and human rights activists strongly condemned on Friday a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) crackdown on the Islamist Hamas movement, saying it was in violation of human rights.

They blamed a new U.S.-mediated interim peace deal signed between the Palestinians and Israel last week at Wye Plantation in Maryland for being behind what they described "unjustified" arrests of Hamas activists.

Since an attempted bomb attack on a bus carrying Jewish settler children in Gaza on Thursday, Palestinian security forces have rounded up more than 100 Hamas activists and placed Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin under house arrest.

A Hamas leaflet faxed to Reuters on Friday criticised the "random arrests" which it said "began early and immediately after the signing of the ill-fated Wye Plantation agreement."

Hamas, which has killed scores of Israelis in suicide bomb attacks, is the main opposition group to the PNA and has denounced the peace deals with Israel as a sell-out.

"The arrest campaign is illegitimate and unjustified," Palestinian legislator Karnal Sharafi said.

Sharafi, who heads the Palestinian Legislative Council's human rights committee, told Reuters he believed the arrest campaign could cause a dangerous rift among Palestinians.

A senior Palestinian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, justified the arrests and said they were carried out "to defend the Palestinian national process and to honour the agreements we have signed."

Under the new peace deal Israel's transfer of a further 13 per cent of the West Bank to Palestinian control is contingent on Palestinian measures against anti-Israeli militants.

"Under the so-called anti-incitement measures of the [Wye] agreement the Authority is now required to violate human rights, from arresting mosque preachers to prohibiting journalists from interviewing the opposition," said Khader Shqairat, head of the Palestinian human rights group LAW.

Shqairat said the security plan the Palestinians have committed to presenting sets a "dangerous precedent which legalises random arrests and violates the rule of law."

Fax from Hamas leader describes house arrest

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A fax bearing the name of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, who is currently under house arrest in Gaza, described in detail Friday how his house was searched and his associates arrested by Palestinian police.

"The Palestinian Authority informed me at 10:15 yesterday evening that I was under house arrest and that I was not to leave the house even for Friday prayers," said the handwritten fax bearing the name of the spiritual leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).

"At the same time my telephone line was cut off," it said. The letter described how masked policemen surrounded the house early in the morning and then entered with a search warrant.

"They showed me an order from the police chief allowing them to search the house, my office, papers, drawers and clothes."

"My wife, daughters and daughter-in-law were searched individually along with my bedroom and bathrooms. They did the same at the houses of my sons Abdul Hamid, Abdul Ghani and Mohammad," the letter said.

The search went on for two hours until 3:30 a.m. during which time security men overturned everything inside. The police then left, taking with them all the papers and files in the house, including files on social affairs, orphans, people's problems and video tapes, the fax said.

"They arrested my companions, Ali Al Baghdadi, Amer Issa and Mahmoud Al Amari, and took them to Tel Al Hawa prison. They confiscated licensed weapons which were in their possession. That was at 3:00 a.m.," the fax said.

Thursday's attack on a bus carrying Jewish settler children killed an Israeli soldier in a jeep escorting them to school. Five people were wounded but none of the children was hurt.

'Algerian suspect extradited from Switzerland'

SION (AP) — An Algerian suspected of being a leader of an Islamist group has been deported from Switzerland nearly a year after he slipped into the country to seek asylum, a Swiss official said Friday.

Ahmad Zaoui was flown from Switzerland to an undisclosed destination Thursday evening. Jean-Rene Fournier, state councillor of the southern canton of Valais, confirmed. He told the Associated Press that Switzerland had found a country that would accept

(Continued on page 3)

U.N. extends Libya sanctions

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Security Council on Thursday extended six-year-old sanctions against Libya for a further four months to press Tripoli to surrender two Lockerbie bombing suspects.

U.N. Security Council President Sir Jeremy Greenstock noted that the 15 members were formally offering to suspend the sanctions as soon as Tripoli hands over two Libyan suspects for trial in the Netherlands.

Greenstock, the British ambassador, and U.S. charge d'affaires Peter Burleigh called on Libya to promptly hand over the two suspects wanted in connection with the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people.

"We want to see an end to this saga, and therefore we want to see the suspects delivered to the Netherlands for the purposes of a trial and then there will be suspension of sanctions," said Greenstock, speaking in his capacity as British envoy.

Greenstock also sought to reassure Libya about the trial proceedings, after receiving a Libyan letter restating Tripoli's reservations about new British and U.S. proposals for the trial.

In the letter, Libyan Ambassador Abu Zeid Omar Dorda stressed that Libya would only hand over two former intelligence agents, Abdul Basset Ali Al Megrahi and Ali Amin Khalifa Fhimah, once Libya had received "a positive response" regarding three key issues.

The U.N. Security Council adopted an air embargo against Tripoli in 1992 to press for the suspects' extradition to Britain or the United States.

In the face of Libyan opposition, backed by Arab and non-aligned states, Britain and the

United States in August shifted their position and agreed to a trial in the Netherlands, but under Scottish law and with Scottish judges.

Dorda reaffirmed Libya's acceptance of the proposals, but reiterated Libya's opposition to the suspects serving their sentence in Scotland if convicted.

His letter also objected to the holding of the trial "in a military facility or any base available for the use of the other concerned parties."

Libya has expressed concern that the military base is used by American forces, and is worried about the possible abduction of the suspects once they are transferred to the Netherlands.

Dorda finally insisted that the Security Council should lift, and not only suspend the sanctions, once Tripoli has complied with the extradition demand.

The Security Council on Aug. 27 unanimously voted to suspend the U.N. sanctions imposed on Libya once the suspects are delivered to the Netherlands.

Addressing Libya's concerns, Greenstock told reporters: "We have provided answers to all the questions and requests for clarification that the Libyans have provided."

He said the accused "should have no fears about their rights... if they are convicted about serving a sentence in the Scottish system which is a comprehensively fair and just system."

Western diplomats say that Tripoli, which is demanding that the suspects should serve any jail sentence in Libya or the Netherlands, apparently fears that British intelligence would have access to the suspects if they are incarcerated in Scotland.



The Shuttle Discovery lifts off the launch pad on Thursday at Kennedy Space Center, Florida. Discovery carried a seven-person international crew which will perform several scientific experiments during their nine-day mission (AFP photo)

Wye River boosts Israeli premier's poll standings

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Wye River peace accord with the Palestinians boosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's standing in the polls on Friday, giving him up to an 11-point lead over opposition Labour Party chief Ehud Barak.

With speculation mounting that Netanyahu could call elections early next year, a survey published by the Maariv newspaper found that 46 per cent of voters would back the prime minister for reelection, against 35 per cent who would support Barak.

It was Netanyahu's biggest lead in the polls since Barak took over the Labour Party in June 1997 and appeared to reflect public support for the new peace agreement reached between his right-wing government and the Palestinians last week in Washington after 19 months of peacemaking deadlock.

Under the deal, Israel will cede more of the West Bank in exchange for tougher Palestinian action to curb anti-Israel violence.

The Maariv poll showed that Netanyahu would fare less well if his rival was not Barak but former army chief of staff Amnon Shabak, a popular moderate whom the Labour Party has been trying to recruit into its ranks since he retired from the military earlier this year.

Even though Shabak has yet to enter the political ring, 40 per cent of those queried in the poll said they would vote for him, compared to 44 per cent for Netanyahu, if they were in

a two-way race for the premiership.

A second poll published by the Yediot Aharanot newspaper gave Netanyahu a 45-41 per cent lead over Barak, a finding similar to other surveys carried out over the past 10 months.

The Maariv survey also found that 60 per cent of those questioned feared that Netanyahu would become a target of Jewish extremists angered by his decision to pursue the Oslo, land-for-peace process.

The poll was published three years after a religious right-wing radical shot and killed Labour Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin because of the government's policy of returning land to the Palestinians.

'Israel of stealing Lebanese soil'

BEIRUT (AP) — After accusing Israel of taking its water and using south Lebanon to test missiles, Lebanon is now accusing the Jewish state of stealing its soil.

Parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri sent letters to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and Arab League Secretary General Emad Abdul Meguid on Thursday urging them to intervene to stop Israel from allegedly stealing top soil from southern Lebanon.

The Beirut newspaper The Daily Star reported Monday that Israeli trucks were carrying soil from the Al Marj area in the Israeli-occupied zone to northern Israel, Israeli troops and an allied militia occupy a strip of south Lebanon as a buffer against guerrilla attacks.

It was confirmed to us recently that Israel is systematically scooping hundreds of tonnes of soil from Al Marj... and transporting it to the northern Galilee for its farming needs," Berri wrote in his letter, which was published by the official National News Agency on Thursday. Berri said the soil operation began two weeks ago and was "a violation of all international laws and regulations."

The Daily Star published a photograph of what it said were two Israeli trucks being loaded with top soil in Al Marj. The Lebanese soil is said to be richer than northern Israel's as the farmland of south Lebanon is little cultivated owing to the conflict between Israeli and guerrilla forces.

The Israeli government coordinator for south Lebanon, Uri Lubrani, dismissed the report late Thursday.



Long-haired commuters get the chop

MOSCOW (AFP) — Police in the Siberian city of Vladivostok caught two youngsters trying to snip off the waist-length hair of a woman on a packed tram, reported the ITAR-TASS news agency Friday. Their impromptu hairdressing was no prank, but part of a booming business in false hair pieces. Local police said more and more unwanted haircuts were being reported, as culprits take advantage of crowded public transport to crop long locks and ponytails for sale to wig-makers.

Lottery winner to give away fortune

SYDNEY (AFP) — An Australian man who won \$7.4 million in a lottery game said Friday he planned to give away the bulk of his fortune to those more needy than himself. "It's just too much money — what would I do with it," he said. "I'll keep maybe a million for myself, and the rest I'll give to people who need it more than me."

Simpson among top catchphrases

LONDON (AFP) — Bart Simpson makes it twice. "The X Files" gets a mention and even Bugs Bunny joins in. They're all the inspiration of some of this century's most famous catchphrases. According to the prestigious Oxford Dictionary of 20th Century Quotations, cartoon character Bart's "Eat my shorts" has now entered public consciousness along with "I'm Bart Simpson, who the hell are you?". He joins the likes of Bugs Bunny ("What's up Doc?") and sci-fi television series "The X Files" with "The truth is out there."

Diana's butler raises funds

NEW YORK (AP) — Princess Diana's former butler will run in the New York City Marathon on Sunday to raise funds in her memory. Paul Burrell is raising money for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, said Paula Turner, a marathon spokeswoman. Burrell, 47, has travelled widely as fund-raising manager for the fund, which provides money for such charities as the international campaign against land mines. Princess Diana died last year in a car crash.

Cruise, Kidman accept 'substantial' settlement

LONDON (AP) — Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman accepted a "substantial" settlement Thursday from a newspaper that reported he was gay and their marriage was a sham to cover it up. Cruise showed up in court to hear a public apology from Express Newspapers for a "highly offensive" article in the Oct. 5, 1997, Express on Sunday Magazine, which also said he was impotent and sterile. "I don't take a whole lot of pleasure in being here today," he said later.

Pavarotti recuperates at Italian spa

NEW YORK (AP) — Luciano Pavarotti is shaping up at an Italian spa near Austria. "I feel very, very well. I was just out to walk in the mountains. I just returned," he said Thursday from Merano, Italy. "I used a cane. If you walk in the mountains, go up and down, you must have the cane. Rumours of retirement swept the opera world last week when Pavarotti cancelled three Met appearances in November, citing more recuperation time needed from hip replacement and knee replacement surgery over the summer."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli, Pakistani presidents in first meeting

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The presidents of Israel and Pakistan held an unprecedented meeting on the sidelines of celebrations in Ankara for the 75th anniversary of the Turkish republic. Israeli newspapers said Friday, President Mohammad Rafiq Tarar of Pakistan approached Israel's Ezer Weizman during a reception Thursday and shook his hand saying, "I have heard much about you as a man of peace," the Yediot Aharanot reported. The two then held a conversation about the troubled peace process with the Palestinians and Tarar expressed hope that "one day we will meet again," the newspaper said. Yediot Aharanot quoted an unnamed Israeli official as hailing the Pakistani president's overture.

Settler arrested for 'harassing Palestinians'

PETAH TIKVA (AFP) — A right-wing Israeli radical appeared in court Friday charged with involvement in numerous attacks on Palestinians living near the militant Jewish settlement of Yitzhar. Shazar Zeligler was arrested late Thursday and a judge in this town outside Tel Aviv ordered him held Friday for an additional five days while prosecutors prepare an indictment against him, court officials said. Police said numerous arrest warrants had been issued against Zeligler over the past three years for a series of aggressions and disturbances targeting Palestinians living near Yitzhar.

Turkey intercepts 101 refugees

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Turkish security forces on Friday intercepted 101 refugees from Senegal, Senegal and Uganda trying to make their way to Italy, the Anatolia news agency reported. The refugees were arrested in Bozoyazi district on the Mediterranean shore in Turkey's south. They had been brought to Bozoyazi from Istanbul by bus. Anatolia said Turkey has become a springboard for refugees from Asia and Africa trying to get to Western Europe.

Dog saves cat from hawk

OSHKOSH, Wisconsin (AP) — Some dogs chase cats. Samson saves them. Samson, a 45-kilogramme, Rottweiler-Saint Bernard mix, saved a year-old cat named Baby from a hawk that tried to scoop up the tiny animal with its talons. The five-year-old dog has been friends with Baby since she was adopted by his owner Jerry Krueger. He took preventative measures when he saw the hawk eying Baby from afar. "How he knew that hawk was there, I don't know," Krueger said. Neighbour Roger Hannerman said he witnessed Tuesday's incident, watching from his yard as the hawk dove for the cat. His hackles raised, Samson barked and ran to Baby, knocking her off her feet with his nose. Hannerman said the big dog then placed his body over the cat to protect her, and the hawk flew away. "It was over in 10 seconds, it happened so fast," Hannerman said. "The dog protected that cat." Before this attack, Samson had protected her against a neighbourhood dog.

Baghdad's university innovates to survive

BAGHDAD (AFP) — In the harsh economic climate of U.N. sanctions, now in their ninth year, Baghdad University has turned to innovative ventures to pay for its survival.

"The university has begun to offer its services to the public and private sectors in the form of study projects," the university's president, Abdul Ilah Khashab, told AFP.

Each department is offering services according to its speciality, which range from architectural designs for houses and factories, to translation to management training programmes.

The agriculture department is offering to cultivate land and sell the harvest and has taken over a plant manufacturing milk products, while

the veterinary faculty will treat animals.

The university's laboratories have also become involved in these projects, in which both students and teachers participate.

Ten faculties have started offering night classes to paying students, Khashab said.

Last year, the university won 350 contracts, which generated \$400,000 in extra revenue.

"Eighty per cent of this was allocated to teachers and 20 per cent went into maintenance in certain departments," he said.

The plunging Iraqi dinar has meant that university professors now get paid the equivalent of about \$10 a month.

This experience "has taught us to be less dependent on state funding," which has been slashed since U.N. sanctions were imposed following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Khashab said.

He said the university's laboratories were dilapidated and were trying to operate with faulty equipment, since they could not import spare parts.

The university, which was founded in 1975, has more than 50,000 students in 21 departments.

Under the U.N. oil-for-food programme, which began in December 1996, Iraq is allowed to sell limited quantities of crude in return for humanitarian supplies.

Just under \$182 million of this revenue

has been allocated to education.

In September, Education Minister Fahd Salem Al Sharqa said this amount was not enough to meet "one thousandth" of the country's education needs.

There are about 250,000 students in Iraq across 12 universities and 10,000 teachers. Higher Education Minister Abdul Jabbar Tufiq said earlier this month.

He said university professors "can no longer participate in international scientific conferences" since they cannot travel.

He added that Iraq no longer gives scholarships to study abroad, while before the embargo it provided \$50,000 worth of scholarships to 3,000 students each year.